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Theme:

APPROACH TO TRIBAL COMMUNITIES TODAY

DILBAR HANS

NIRMAL MINZ

B. M. PUGH

J. A. ROSE

T. S. WILKINSON

CONSULTATION FINDINGS

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Editors

P. D. DEVANANDAN & M. M. THOMAS

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EDITORIAL

The Tribal People Today

The impact of the modern world disorganises all traditional cultures. And cultural disintegration always brings with it agony of body, mind and soul. But for no one is the agony more painful than for the tribal people. They have retained a "simple" culture in splendid isolation from other peoples for ages and they have resisted attempts by others to disturb their autonomy. But now they are thrown irresistibly into the whirlpool of the most "complex" modern life. It has resulted in a great deal of demoralisation. It has also raised new hopes and aspirations among them. The revolutionary changes coming about in the life of the tribal communities, as all others in our modern world, have tremendous destructive and creative characteristics and potentialities.

In the past, the Christian Missions and the Government of India were forces "foreign" and "paternal" in character. The question which the missionaries, anthropologists and civil servants discussed in those days were no doubt important; but the leaders of tribal peoples themselves were not actively involved in the discussion. For this reason, many of the old questions appear today to have a certain unreality, and perhaps they have become irrelevant and out of date. This does not imply that the missionary, the anthropologist and the civil servant have ceased to have real roles to play in meeting the problems of tribal communities and the Churches in tribal areas. They have. But the context in which their roles are set has changed a great deal.

The transition from Mission to Church has already helped the Churches in tribal areas to establish themselves with indigenous leadership, which in many areas is dynamic, forward-looking and independent; so that the Church has come to belong to the people in a new way. Independence of India has awakened the tribal people; and under their own leaders they are facing the problems of their political integration with the rest of the nation. Both these developments have enhanced their sense of selfhood which however has yet to find its true meaning and means of expression

in the modern world. The spiritual struggles of tribal peoples are integrally related to the search for the meaning of their new selfhood and the new means of its expression in our age. They find their focus in the hopes, aspirations and problems which their educated leaders face, whether they be Christian, pagan or secularised. And any approach to tribal communities in India today, by Church and Nation, should be relevant to them.

The Consultation held in Rajpur-Dehra Dun on *A Christian Approach to Tribal Communities in India Today* was significant in that Christian leaders of tribal communities in different parts of India came together, for the first time, to confer with each other (and with a few non-tribals concerned with study of and service to tribal people) on their new problems and tasks in the Church and the Nation. The papers and findings of the Consultation published in this volume of *Religion and Society* should be considered no more than as the first corporate attempt of the Christian leaders of tribal India at understanding and evaluating the cultural revolution in which their peoples are involved and at thinking through the life and mission of Church and State within that context.

India's New Nationhood

The problem of bringing a sense of Indian nationhood to the tribal peoples of India has certain unique features. But it is not altogether unlike the problem of integrating other groups in India as parts of one nation. The truth is that traditionally all of us, to whatever community we belong, were isolated from each other, each living its own life; and it is only in the recent past, thanks to British Imperialism and Indian Nationalism and plans of national development, that we have begun to think of ourselves as one nation. It means that nationhood is something in the process of becoming something which we have to promote among all the religious, racial, linguistic and caste groups in India. In such a situation, nothing is more injurious to national integration than the assumption that Indian nationality is something already established or that it is a matter of belonging to one religion, race or language or assimilation into it. Many non-tribals and many tribals have argued back and forth on the question whether tribals by their religion, race and language always belonged to the Indian (meaning Hindu) family. That is an irrelevant question

for national integration. The important question is that of the future, not of the past. Indian nationhood like every modern nationhood is composite in character, and is based on the conviction of different groups in the geographical area of India that they should belong together for the sake of their separate and common good. This conviction has to be cultivated and strengthened through the years of mutual aid and common effort in building the nation. No other approach is real and no other approach to education for citizenship among the tribals can be effective.

Christ and Culture

In grappling with the cultural revolution that has overtaken the tribals, there is need for the Churches in tribal areas to return to the fundamentals of their Faith. Rajpur sees the need to emphasise the essential core of the Gospel of Christ at two points:—

Firstly, the Gospel of Christ should not be equated with a particular culture or moral system; it should be understood as the power to transform and to recreate all patterns of culture and systems of morality. In fact, nothing is more important for men in a changing society than to affirm that the Gospel is not subjection to law but the freedom of grace. Thus the gospel of Grace brings to the tribals a spiritual freedom which includes freedom from the norms on the one hand of their traditional culture, and on the other hand of western culture, and freedom to work out a new style of living conducive to greater responsibility in the modern world. Speaking of the old unsophisticated ethical ideals of honesty, straightforwardness and self-control which were "seldom strained for our social relations were immediate and arose from a certain innocence" and the growing gulf now opening up "between our traditional strandards and our present practices" which brings with it a deep "sense of guilt" and a good deal of moral uncertainty, the Consultation says:

> In essence this is a challenge for us Christians to accept the inner core of the Gospel which is grace and forgiveness and not a legal system of moral absolutes. It is in the continuing experience of life with Christ in the concrete situation that the Christian individual and fellowship can take firm decisions and act, free from guilt and desire for self-justification. It is in this way

> that the Church may provide moral fibre for the character of our people and moral foundations for our new societies.

Elsewhere, speaking of the necessity to work out "a Christian pattern of living" for the tribals, it says:

> The Christian way should not be identified with western norms of behaviour. In the light of the Biblical understanding of life, we Christians have to work out in concrete situations what is involved in living by the light of Christ in modern life.

Secondly, "the redeeming of corporate structures and of social and cultural life is an essential part of the message of the Gospel". No doubt, the Christian Missions "made use of the corporate structures" in effecting Mass Movements among the tribal peoples, but the structures themselves were never conceived as coming within the scope of divine redemption. So the Rajpur Consultation says:

> It (the Gospel) spoke to us as individual people and had too little corporate reality.....Jesus Christ is even now only just becoming in our minds and spirits, relevant to our social and cultural life as a whole.

This leads the Consultation to speak of the "great need" for tribal Christians to "study more deeply" their ancient religions "in order to find points both of contact with and departure from the Christian revelation", and their cultural heritage so as to evolve "a new form of Church life and order" which has "closer relation to our own roots and natural ways of life and authority".

Church and Social Science

The traditional relation between the missionary and the social anthropologist in India as elsewhere has been one of mutual suspicion. In part it reflected the 19th century spirit of conflict between science and religion. But other faults on both sides aggravated it. The missionary too easily identified Christianity with the norms of western culture, and therefore introduction of the Gospel very often meant disintegration of other cultures and a total indifference to the valuable elements in them. The anthropologist condemned all missionary work as violence to the integrity of cultures and men; and advocated a policy of leaving

each culture (or religion as a mere function of culture) to itself. Both parties have travelled a long way from these traditional positions. Among the younger generation, both among the missionaries and the students of the science of society, there is the consciousness of the need for an integration of the insights of faith and science in formulating the practical approach to tribal and other peoples, though a proper philosophy of such integration is yet to be evolved. The Rajpur Consultation represented this stage in the relation between evangelists and social scientists in the Indian Church.

It is also encouraging to find that Dr. Verrier Elwin himself a noted anthropologist and Adviser to the Government of India on tribal affairs thought the Report of the Rajpur Consultation a valuable document. In a personal letter he writes:

> I am most grateful to you for having sent me your Report. I think it is a most interesting and remarkable document and I warmly congratulate you and your colleagues on it. I am having copies made in order to send them to a number of people in important positions relating to the tribal world, which I shall forward with a personal letter commending it to their notice.

CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH*

By Dilbar Hans, *Ranchi*

Introduction

The tribal communities do present a problem. What can or should one do to these people? Should they be left in wire-net cages as museum pieces, should we educate them with a view to amalgamate them with the rest of the larger social groups in India, or should we allow them to die out? Has Christianity a worthy solution to this problem to offer? A Christian way of trying to deal with this problem and to solve it is the Christian approach to these people. Our Lord Jesus Christ who came to give life and abundant life to His sheep can give this abundant life to these tribals also.

What is a tribal community? I feel greatly attached to that small phrase of W. H. R. Rivers: "A tribe is a social group of a simple kind." Most of you know Mr. Culshaw of the Bible Society. I once attended a course of lectures delivered by him and he defined the tribals as a people of a *simple culture*. Now you know why I look so simple and why my speech is so simple. I come from among these people of a simple culture. By the way, Mr. Culshaw bore testimony privately of the simplicity of the Santhals among whom he worked for many years illustrating his statement by the following two stories: While travelling by train, once he had to wait for his train at a railway station waiting room. Some Santhal girls were loading coal on the train. When Mr. Culshaw came out of the waiting room, one of the girls seeing him shouted to the others, "Hello girls, come on, come on, come and have a look at this white rabbit coming out of his burrow". On another occasion, Mr. Culshaw was going somewhere on his bicycle. As he went along fast he met a little boy and his father walking along the road. The little boy seeing Mr. Culshaw hurrying along on his bicycle asked his father, "Daddy, where is

* This is the opening talk given by Rt. Rev. Dilbar Hans of Ranchi (Bihar) at the Rajpur Consultation on *A Christian Approach to Tribal Communities in India Today* held in June 1961 (*see* report elsewhere).

that gentleman going so fast?" The father replied, "Well, don't you know, that his wife has run away? She is running so fast that he has to pursue her on a machine."

The different kinds of tribes in India have been enumerated by learned anthropologists. The question before us, however, is: How has a Christian approach been made to these people in the past. I find that any sort of an exhaustive presentation of the historical facts in answer to this question is rather beyond me. Christians have approached these tribals in the past in various parts of India in various ways. The problem before us is also to try and find out the main issues emerging out of this historical research which today call for rethinking. I can, I think, merely throw out a few hints here and there from my experience in that part of the country from where I come, namely, the southern part of Bihar and leave the Conference alone to draw its own conclusions.

Meaning of Christian Approach

When we want to do some rethinking, that involves some judgement on the past approach to the tribals, some evaluation of it. This means that we assume a standard for ourselves with which we judge our past efforts. Where do we find a standard of a Christian approach to a tribal or to anyone whatsoever for that matter? Our Lord Jesus Christ, of course, is the supreme standard of any approach for us. What are the elements in His Divine approach? What is the pattern of God's approach in Jesus Christ to mankind?

A great fact, and a sad one, in the history of the human race has been the fall of man: and ever since then God, our loving Father, had been engaged in approaching humanity to save it from destruction. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The Son of God came into the world to save sinners.

The first element we see then in this approach of God wherewith He approaches man is the approach of visitation—of coming in contact with. God was not satisfied with saving man from on high and sitting upon His high heaven. He designs to come down to earth to touch him with His loving hands to win back and save him. Using or misusing the God-given freedom of will,

with which God wanted man to come to Him to be in fellowship with Him, man erred and strayed from God's ways and thus like a fish of the ocean wilfully jumped out of water and there on dry land began to perish and with the passage of time his plight became more and more pitiable. The fish is dying—he can never jump back into the water of itself. So the mighty ocean has to heave itself and the gigantic waves approach the poor fish and lovingly engulf it back into the heart of the limitless, fathomless depths of the ocean of love and life, the bosom of God.

Jesus Christ Himself is the approach of God. Generations of Christians, great missionaries, have literally followed this example. They have travelled over vast expanses of land and water to come to the tribals of India to give them the message of salvation. In the name of us all I would like to bow my head to them in deep gratitude. Approach to the tribals must be one of visitation in the real sense of the term.

God so loved that He sent His Son. The motive behind God's approach of man was love, the only worthy motive. Our visit to the tribal must be motivated by love. He must know that he is being approached with real love. This love has to manifest itself in a real tenderness towards the tribal, true sympathy, intimate understanding and a thorough identification with him. Sincerity is the hallmark of the much talked of "missionary spirit" or "missionary zeal" a lack of which is bound to bring about a failure of the approach. No amount of coming to the tribals, visiting them, setting up welfare projects for them, spending sacks full of money for them would be successful if devoid of this sincere identification with him. Even if people become Christians as a result of this kind of faulty approach they would do so with unworthy motives—*viz.*, only for material gain because it is the only advantage they can see presented to them in this kind of approach.

God became man in Jesus Christ His Son to save him. Any Christian who wants to serve the tribals has to, in the same manner, identify himself with them: he has to become a tribal himself in some genuine way. I would say that this involves a correct knowledge of the tribal way of thinking, saying and doing, knowledge of their culture and religion and all the deepest things in their lives that move them in their day-to-day living. This has to be done with real sympathy which means a real sincere appreciа-

tion of any good that is among them, of any deep and desperate need felt by them.

Our Lord humbled Himself to become man, in His great love for him. We see this in the way in which He loved His disciples and having loved them to the end..... He took a towel and girded Himself with it and then pouring water in a basin He lovingly washed His disciples' feet. That is the great standard of service for us. A Christian approach to the tribal communities in India has to be that of those loving hands of our Lord which came in contact with the hot dusty horned feet of His disciples and washed them.

In the past a great deal had been done on these lines. Necessarily Christians from far-away lands came to the tribals, showed them a genuine love by learning their language, by studying their culture, and their religion and their vitally felt needs, and made gigantic efforts to meet these needs and the results have been phenomenal.

I suppose many examples come to mind of this in various parts of the country. In Chota Nagpur the German Lutherans, the English Anglicans and the Belgian Jesuits did this with great success. When they came, the tribals were having a real hard time, undergoing a great deal of oppression at the hands of the zamindars; no one so far had any interest in them. They were being robbed and swindled right and left of all they had—their land which they had tenderly prepared with their own hands and feet, clearing away the deep virgin forests and fighting away the pythons and the tigers and other wild animals of the forest, and their other properties.

Christians approached them with loving tangible service. In doing this, they, of course, came in conflict with selfish vested interests, namely, of the other people who were oppressing these tribals, and this conflict has had far-reaching consequences. Evidences of this can be seen even today in abundance which is continuing to make things difficult. We have to find out how to bring about a reconciliation here for the sake of the evangelistic work of the Church. This is a real problem. I don't know whether I have made myself very clear. Has Christian missionary activity alienated the tribals from their neighbours, who had of course

been oppressing them, but with whom they have to continue to live together in peace and hormony?

The loving service and help rendered to the tribals by Christian agencies were not without some reactions and repercussions. The two skirmishes in which the tribals got involved can be cited as examples of this: The Sardar fighting and the Birsa Bhagwan rising, were aimed against the oppressing zamindars and landlords but ended up with facing the British guns. Those soldiers who fired on the Mundas on the Dombari Hill had stood on my own ancestral fields.

In the spiritual world, the tribals were under the oppression of another kind, a very real oppression, *viz.*, of a host of Evil Spirits, which had dire consequences in the lives of these tribals. Christian approach had been of bringing real help and succour to the tribals in Jesus Christ. When our Lord is given a place, superstitions die out although they die hard in some or most cases, but they do die in the end. What attempts have been made in the past to bring this about is an interesting study. This, however, brings us to the entire question of how to bring Jesus Christ to these tribal people. This is an important issue requiring rethinking to a certain extent. What could be attempted, in my opinion, I have put down in my little book, *Not Without Witness*, and I shall not try here to repeat myself. How can we use the religion of the tribals in presenting the Gospel to them? Can we take it as a preparation for the Gospel as God has not left Himself without a witness among any people whom He has created.

Not merely their religion but their entire way and pattern of life, resulting from this religion or otherwise, their whole culture, need to be studied and made use of in the work of evangelization. Matters related to language, *i.e.*, poetry and other literature, if any, their recreational activities—if I begin to wax eloquent over the whole question of our dances and drums, there will, of course, be no end of it—their social organization, all will have to be brought to the service of the Gospel.

Then what about the so-called Mass Movements? They have to be freshly studied. As the tribals are usually a closely knit people in society, mass movements are indicated in a real practical manner. I see, however, one problem here. If these

people have been a closely knit people with deep tribal loyalty and were one great mass, what is denominational approach of Christianity doing to this great solidarity? If they are one tribe, should they not be happier if they all belonged to one Church? Is not denominationalism detrimental to this social genius of the tribals?

Some of the tribal communities now have had Christianity for two or three generations. The question of permanently consolidating them in the Faith which they have embraced because of our preaching is an acute one in this generation in my opinion. What kind of Church life is most suited to them in which they could be permanently settled. What kind of Church life is most suited to the real genius of tribal psychology and tribal life. This would require proper investigation and perhaps lengthy experimentation, but would be worthwhile and of real service to the tribals. We seem to agree that tribal culture embodies many good and valuable elements which ought to be preserved and Christianity allowed to further enrich them. The question is what kind of Church life, or organization, seems to be most conducive toward this, so that the tribal heritage of simple devotion, of inborn forthright truthfulness, of joyous expressions of spiritual sentiments and emotions find a place in their contribution to the universal worship and service of Almighty God, the Father of all, the Sovereign Lord.

Creative Adjustment to Change

In the Providence of God, we are meeting at a very appropriate time in history. We need to find out what old issues call for rethinking, but we are also faced with entirely new situations among the tribals at the present moment. I can just give the example of Chota Nagpur.

The primitive tribes being driven before advancing greater crowds had to find refuge in the depths of the forests in Chota Nagpur. They dug their heels there and so long thought they were left in peace. They had left fertile fields behind them, but when they settled down in Chota Nagpur, they found that they were treading on hills and valleys containing billions of rupees worth of almost all the minerals considered of material value in the world. The time has now come that with a view to exploiting the mineral wealth of the land, mining activities have been greatly

stepped up by the Government and huge factories are being set up in these tribal areas. The huge steel works in Jamshedpur, in Rourkela, the proposed one at Bokaro, the factory for building heavy machinery in Hatia, near Ranchi, are all within the tribal inhabited parts of Chota Nagpur. Large tribal populations have only just now been uprooted from their hearth and home to make room for these enormous factory areas and new industrial towns, new railway routes, and dozens of gigantic thermal and irrigation dams. They have been moved from the plains to the hills and forests, and now, just now, they are being moved from there also to none knows where. They are asking in understandable bewilderment why the poor tribals should be required to make such great sacrifices for the sake of the so-called economic development of the country by leaving behind hearth and home sanctified by long occupation of generations and generations of them. No amount of monetary compensation can make good the loss in their opinion, of all the old sentimental attachments they had for their property.

The momentous question here seems to be what the Christian approach is to the tribal faced with this situation. How can he profitably adapt himself to these rapidly changing conditions: how can we help him do so. How can Christianity stem the tide of detribalization, if this is involved in it. Or is detribalization good for him in the end? What share is the displaced tribal going to have in the resulting advantages of this economic development projects and works undertaken by the Government. How to help him get it? How far is it going to be good for him? What are the opportunities for a Christian approach to the tribal in these rapidly changinc circumstances? In England the Church lost many opportunities during the great Industrial Revolution there. How can we guard against the danger of losing the opportunity for Christian service in our industrial revolution which is of no less momentous importance.

The tribal is a sturdy, independent, self-respecting, self-reliant fellow. In all the help we render to him we should guard against the danger of destroying all these good qualities of his. How to do this? All the help we give him must be such that it will enable him to help himself with it and not make him entirely dependent on others.

ISOLATION, ASSIMILATION AND INTEGRATION IN THEIR HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE*

By T. S. Wilkinson, *Nagpur*

Changing Concerns of the Science of Man

The history of civilised man's dealings with the tribal people can be divided into three main periods: (1) In the first period studies of various tribes were conducted with the chief purpose of knowing their own place in the biological and cultural evolutionary scheme. (2) The second period emerged when after having observed cultural similarities between people geographically separated, students of tribal society became interested in the dynamics of culture. (3) As a result of diffusion and acculturation studies there developed a keen concern for the welfare of the tribals which marks the third and the present period. A student of cultural history will notice that there is an implicit relationship between these three periods and their successive emergence. However, it should not be understood that in the first two periods there was no concern for fellow-beings. Let us examine these periods briefly.

It was only after the great epoch of discovery and European expansion into the Near and Far East, the Americas and Africa, that it became apparent that other modes of behaviour than those known so far, other forms of linguistic expressions and other ways of worshipping the gods existed among people living in these newly visited regions of the world. But this early knowledge was based on the fragmentary and biased accounts of travellers, explorers, administrators and missionaries who recorded only such aspect of a people's culture that was pertinent from their point of view.[1] Not until the middle of the last century when social scientists started visiting these non-literate people

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* This is part of a paper read at the Rajpur-Dehra Dun Consultation on *A Christian Appoach to Tribal Communities in India Today*. Dr. T. S. Wilkinson is Head of the Department of Sociology of the University of Nagpur and was one of the Conveners of the Rajpur Consultation.

[1] R. Peddington, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Vol. I, London, 1950, pp. 8-9.

for the express purpose of studying them and their culture that the study of tribal people, now known as anthropology, developed on scientific lines.[2] Professionally trained field workers, however, were almost unknown until 1900.

The biological evolutionary theory proved important for the social scientist on three points. Firstly, that all animal life evolved from the unicellular organism and that it went through certain stages of development. Secondly, animal organism had no control over its evolution. The organism just unfolded itself. Lastly, the principle: "Struggle for existence and survival of the fittest" was enunciated by the evolutionists. These three points gave rise to the organismic concept of society. Herbert Spencer, for example, propounded his theory of universal evolution which "he sought to apply to all realms of phenomena—physical, organic, mental and social."[3]

Using the theories of the Darwinian doctrine of evolution the social scientists concluded: (1) society is evolving and is goal-directed. (2) If this is so then the differences of culture only mark the various stages of development that a people have reached and that there is nothing that can be done to alter or expedite the evolutionary process. (3) Lastly, the struggle for existence is automatically eliminating those that are not fit to survive. In order to arrange chronologically the different stages of social development they started studying contemporary "primitive" societies. Further, it confirmed the belief that "whatever was, was, because it had to be—because it ought to be".[4] In other words, primitive societies were not to be tampered with because they would in course of time evolve despite all human efforts.

The evolutionists such as Morgan, Tylor, Spencer, Briffault and Westermark provided the basis for the "leave them alone" policy. Auguste Comte's "The Law of Three Stages"[5] was an expression of the evolutionary doctrine and various other social scientists of the 19th century supported this doctrine. Therefore, the 19th century was the century of evolutionism which lent

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[2] R. L. Beals and H. Hoijer, *An Introduction to Anthropology*, New York, 1957, p. 13.

[3] C. A. Ellwood, *A History of Social Philosophy*, New York, 1953, pp. 442–43.

[4] V. F. Calverton, Ed., *The Making of Man*, New York, 1931, p. 4.

[5] C. A. Ellwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 380–87.

added support to the *laissez faire* politico-economic theories and provided a logic to explain social difference, development and progress.

With the rejection of the evolutionary theories in the beginning of the 20th century and the increasing contacts between tribals and civilised people, the attention of social scientists was drawn towards the processes of acculturation and diffusion. These two terms suggest methodological distinctions alone. According to Herskovits, "Diffusion is the study of achieved cultural transmission, while acculturation is the study of cultural transmission in process."[6] The chief students of cultural transmission were Elliot Smith, W. J. Perry, F. Graebner, P. W. Schmidt, F. Boas, R. Lowie and A. Goldenweiser.

Studies in cultural transmission indicated with great emphasis the dynamic aspect of cultures and also the strains and stresses of culture-change due to either internal invention or acculturation. Further, it pointed to the need for rapid reintegration after a period of change. In places, such as the Americas, South Africa and Australia, where large number of tribal people came in contact with civilised people rather suddenly, the dangers of uncontrolled acculturation became evident. This led to the growth of all kinds of vices, exploitation and group-tensions and the colonial administrators in these regions, who had had training in anthropology, felt it necessary to curb and check acculturation of a type that was harmful for smooth administration.

One chief danger of acculturation is that people accept more readily the material aspect of a culture because of its "inherent communicability"[7] whereas the non-material aspect though essentially related to the material is not communicated easily and thus remains unaccepted.

Cultural transmission studies though started with purely scientific motive became the basis for the development of Applied Anthropology which is not more than about twenty-five years old.[8] Undirected acculturation led to exploitation of the tribals all over the world. The tribals individually and collectively were

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[6] M. J. Herskovits, *Cultural Anthropology*, New York, 1955, p. 472.

[7] R. Linton, *The Study of Man*, New York, 1936, p. 338.

[8] M. N. Srinivas, Ed., *Methods in Social Anthropology, Selected Essays by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown*, Bombay, 1958, p. 88.

first swindled out of their land[9] and then made victims of vices common in civilised society. Furthermore, the introduction of a different economic system, new set of values, strange social institutions, and alien gods, created confusion and chaos leading to hopelessness and human degradation. This made the administrator, anthropologist, social scientist, social worker and philanthropist deeply concerned about the condition of the suffering tribals. The questions regarding isolation, detribalisation, acculturation and diffusion were re-examined with the purpose of developing a system of knowledge for removing the strains and stresses of cultural change. This is why applied anthropology has been named "philanthropology" in some sections.

Tribal Studies in India

The importance of the knowledge of anthropology for efficient administration was, perhaps, first realised as early as 1807, when the Court of Directors of the East India Company made a formal decision that "such knowledge would be of great use in the future administration of the country". To this effect Dr. Francis Buchanon was appointed by the Governor-in-Council to undertake an ethnographic survey "to inquire into the conditions of the inhabitants of Bengal and their religion". Since then several anthropologist administrators like Risley, Thurston, Dalton, Grigson, Gurdon, Russel, Hutton, and others were deputed from time to time by the British Government to prepare handbooks, gazetteers and monographs on the tribes and castes of India. These studies gave a good and descriptive account of the habitat, food, economy, diseases, religion, custom and traditions, and social organisation, of the tribes and were primarily intended to help the administration. Contact between tribals and non-tribals was very little and therefore the problems of acculturation were negligible. Wherever the tribals lived in intimate and prolonged contact with the Hindus they were slowly and gradually assimilated into the Hindu fold. In this regard Dr. Ghurye states: "The tribals in all probability got their knowledge of regular agriculture from the Hindus. The Hinduised ones began to like settled life, and as a result of the creation of complex wants some sections

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[9] See G. S. Ghurye, *The Schedule Castes* (Second Edition), Bombay, 1959, pp. 23–27.

became far more steady and mobile labourers than they ever were in their original surroundings,"[10]

In support of this view-point Dr. Ghurye quotes many British administrators of the 19th and early 20th century. But it should be noted that what these scholars had recorded was not acculturation but diffusion. They saw certain cultural similarities between two neighbouring Hindu and tribal groups and then worked backwards to see how these similarities had come about. Consequently, these similarities do not prove that at the time of acculturation the receiving group did not suffer any stresses and strains. It may be assumed that the problems of acculturation and assimilation then may not have been so great because as Dr. Hutton states, "changes which were taking place in the so-called aboriginal society or societies of India for centuries before the British rule were slow and therefore capable of gradual and proper adaptation. The development of communications led to a sudden increase of contacts, rendering the tempo of change too swift for the tribes to accommodate themselves to it properly".[11] A similar view is expressed by S. C. Roy in regard to the Mundas.[12]

But with improvement in the means of transportation, industrial development and population increase, the habitations of the tribals were being invaded by civilised man in search of agricultural land, minerals, forest resources, and new avenues for trade. "With the opening of the country by roads and railways under the British rule", according to S. C. Roy, "and the gradual deforestation of the country and even the increasing restrictions on the use of forests, these forest tribes (the Birhor and Korwa of Bihar) are slowly and surely dying out, partly from famine and partly from loss of interest in life."

With such changes in the country, students of cultural transmission became deeply concerned about the condition of their tribal countrymen. S. C. Roy, Majumdar, Guha, Elwin and some others wrote papers and monographs indicating the evils of unrestricted acculturation. Yet the British Government in India did very little to help the tribals except for declaring any

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[10] G. S. Ghurye, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

territory backward tract according to the provisions in the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935.

Isolation

Dr. J. H. Hutton, Commissioner for the Census of 1931, was the first to give a solution to the tribal problem of uncontrolled acculturation. "The solution of the problems," according to him, "would be to create self-governing tribal areas with free power of self-determination in regard to surrounding or adjacent unit." This suggestion was with reference to the anthropological knowledge available at that time and such a policy had already been advocated in the colonies of Africa. Applied anthropology was yet to be born and recognised and therefore well-meaning anthropologists and social workers in their attempts to save the tribals from the evil consequences of culture contacts advocated the "separationist" or "isolationist" view-point.

A similar policy of isolationism and indirect rule was adopted in certain parts of Africa and U.S.A. where the tribals were given the right of self-determination. It is unfortunate that a policy, started to help, deteriorated to the position of apartheid. We should remember that the logic of evolutionism suggested a policy of *laissez faire* in all aspects of social and cultural life. The same attitude was reflected in the colonists' dealing with other cultural groups.

In view of all this it is not surprising that Dr. Hutton advocated the creation of "self-governing tribal areas". This was followed by the "monumental monograph" as L. P. Vidyarthi calls it,[13] by Dr. Elwin on the Baiga of the then Central Provinces in 1939. After having lived with the Baigas as a participant observer Elwin felt that they could still be saved from the fate fallen on the aboriginal peoples in other parts of India. This horrible fate was mainly due to "over-hasty and unregulated process of uplift and civilization". Writing about the Hos in Singhbhum, Dr. D. N. Majumdar observed: "But it is a generally accepted fact that the moral deterioration of the Hos has kept pace with their physical degeneration, so that many would like to see the Hos in their former state of lawlessness when they

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[13] L. P. Vidyarthi, *Anthropology Authority and Tribal Welfare in India, Social Research*, Sept.–Nov. 1957, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 234.

derived subsistence from the chase and the produce of the forest, supplemented by pillage or plunder." Not being satisfied with the provisions made in the Government of India Act 1935, for excluding wholly or partially certain areas from the direct operation of legislative control, Dr. V. Elwin advocated the establishment of a National Park "in which not only the Baiga but the thousands of simple Gonds in their neighbourhood might take refuge". In *Loss of Nerve* published in 1947, Elwin's support for isolationism became even stronger.

Elwin affirmed that the tribal population could be divided into three groups: (1) Those who through continuous and intimate contact had become assimilated into the Hindu hierarchy. (2) Those who are partially Hinduized and have thus "suffered moral depression and decay as a result of contacts....." [14] (3) Those tribes that live mostly in the hill sections and are so far free from becoming detribalised. The National Park therefore would provide refuge to the second group and protection to the third.

Elwin has been severely criticised for advocating the policy of segregating the tribals. Dr. Ghurye, in the 1959 edition of the *Scheduled Tribes*, states that the National Park is "an extravagant proposal and its background of unreasonable claims is hardly the best method of serving the cause of the so-called aborigines" [15]; and ultimately, in academic indignation characteristic of the man, he "stamps" Elwin "as a no-changer and revivalist". It is, however, surprising that a scholar of Dr. Ghurye's standing should labour to condemn Elwin's policy of isolationism in 1959 when a few years before that, the propounder himself had declared that under the present circumstances such a policy was not necessary any more. Even while advocating isolationism he makes it clear that this is a temporary measure to protect the tribals from unhealthy contacts, on which matter Ghurye seems to agree, as he quotes the following statement of Elwin: "Thus are they (tribes) to be kept in innocence and happiness for a while till civilization is more worthy to instruct them and until a scientific age has learnt how to bring development and change without

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[14] V. Elwin, *Loss of Nerve*, Bombay, 1947, pp. 1–2.

[15] G. S. Ghurye, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

causing despair."[16] Elwin further said that everything necessary should be done "for a tribe's progress and advantage provided that the quality of tribal life is not impaired, that tribal culture is not destroyed, and that tribal freedom is restored or maintained." These two statements amply indicate that Elwin while advocating his National Park scheme did so with the awareness that social science had not yet discovered scientific methods of introducing change. And secondly, he was not a "no-changer" but said that "progress and advantage" should not be permitted to destroy cultural integrity.

All this, however, should not lead one to believe that the National Park scheme was flawless. There can be, no doubt, many disagreements in details but on the whole it indicates Elwin's deep concern for the well-being of the tribals.

In his book, *A Philosophy for NEFA*, first published in 1957, V. Elwin on realising the misunderstandings his earlier writings had created, explains his position as follows: "It is true that I myself, writing many years ago when India was under British rule, advocated a policy of temporary isolation for certain small tribes but this was not to keep them as they were, but because at that time the only contacts they had with the outside world were debasing contacts, leading to economic exploitation and cultural destruction..... But a policy advocated to meet a set of special circumstances does not hold when those circumstances have changed, and neither I nor any other anthropologist would dream of suggesting such a policy since Independence."[17] He further says, "Isolation in the modern world is impossible; it would not be desirable even if it was possible. The old controversy about zoo and museums has long been dead.....To try to preserve and develop the best elements in tribal art, religion and culture is something very different from wishing to keep the people in a zoo."

Assimilation

The second school has advocated assimilation and its chief exponents are Dr. G. S. Ghurye and Shri A. V. Thakkar. There is a difference of degree in their approaches which we will point out.

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[16] G. S. Ghurye, *op. cit.*, p. 164 and Elwin, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[17] V. Elwin, *A Philosophy for NEFA*, Shillong, 1959, p. 46.

Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess define assimilation as follows: "Assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups and, by sharing their experiences and history, are incorporated with them in a cultural life."[18] According to this definition the assimilating culture so absorbs the other that the latter loses its separate identity.

Dr. Ghurye's main thesis on which he bases his policy of assimilation is that the so-called aborigines are nothing else but Backward Hindus. Of this he has given a very scholarly exposition in *The Scheduled Tribes* the first edition of which appeared in 1943 under the title *The Aborigines-So-called and Their Future*. In order to establish the validity of his view-point he has used the conclusions of many field researchers and anthropologist administrators. He equates culture with religion and thus implies that the very fact of religious difference also means cultural difference.

In the various censuses beginning from 1891 the tribal people were classified separately as animists or tribal religions. Yet a few census commissioners, such as J. A. Baines (1891), E. A. Gait (1911), J. T. Marten (1921) and J. H. Hutton (1931) felt that there was very little difference between Hinduism as practised by the lower castes (probably meaning outcastes) and the tribal religions. Sir H. H. Risley also described Hinduism, in his book, *Peoples of India*, as "animism more or less transformed by philosophy". Therefore, Dr. Ghurye concludes that the assimilation of the tribal people into the Hindu society should be easy and almost natural.

One may agree with the policy of assimilation but the main problem is how to get assimilated without the accompanying stress and strain. Religion is only one aspect of a people's culture and a very small one. Even if there were similarities in other cultural traits it would still not mean similarities in culture.[19] It is the functional relationship between the various traits that gives a culture

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[18] R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, Chicago, 1921, p. 735.

[19] R. Peddington, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–24.

its particular form and character distinct from those of the others. Therefore, despite the similarities in certain cultural traits the dissimilarities in cultures may still exist. Furthermore, wherever the tribals have been absorbed into the Hindu society they have more often than not occupied the lowest rung in the Hindu social ladder. Dr. Hutton, in his chapter in the book, *Modern India and The West*, edited by L. S. S. O'Malley, states, "Subsequently, a period of greater understanding led to many attempts to protect and preserve the tribes, and though in many cases these may have come too late to do all they should, in some, at any rate, they have at least prevented the degradation of primitive tribes to the status of outcaste, gispy, or scavenger."[20]

Dr. Ghurye himself states that the Raj Gonds who are now recognised as "members of fairly high status within Hindu society" had to fight a battle in order to acquire it[21] and yet he asserts that assimilation into the Hindu fold will be smooth. The implication from this is that even in the past many were not successful in this "battle" and therefore became the lowest in the Hindu hierarchy. This is the truth and can be verified by any field investigator. Most of the tribals being beef-eaters are abhorred by the caste Hindus and even though they may give it up the stigma still remains. They are thus equated with the outcastes by the Hindus in their social dealings.

Is it proper to humiliate these free and self-respecting people by compelling them to become the lowest of mortals in the Hindu fold in view of the constitutional provisions for the uplift of the under-privileged? Or is it suggested that after they have become Backward Hindus then they will be uplifted? It would interest some to know that even now some of the more progressive members of the various tribes feel offended that the term "scheduled" should be used for both tribes and the so-called outcastes.

Shri A. V. Thakkar gave an exposition of his assimilation-programme in his R. R. Kale Memorial Lecture delivered in 1941. Like a good social worker he pointed at six main problems of the "adivasis" as he called them and suggested that these be tackled with care. He was strongly against the constitutional

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[20] L. S. S. O'Malley, Ed., *Modern India and The West*, London, 1941, p. 417.
[21] G. S. Ghurye, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

provisions that would wholly or partially exclude tribal areas. "The aborigines," he maintained, "should form part of the civilized communities of our country, not for the purpose of swelling the figures of the followers of this religion or that, but to share with the advanced communities the privileges and duties on equal terms in the general social and political life of the country. Saparatism and isolation seem to be dangerous theories and they strike at the root of national solidarity." Shri Thakkar's approach is representative of the social workers who simplify the whole issue of acculturation. However, Thakkar's own contribution for the cause of the tribals should not be underestimated.

Integration

The policy of integration today undergirds the nation's efforts to share with the tribal countrymen the benefits of technology, medicine, advanced agriculture and education. It is the official policy and is being implemented in various ways especially through the multi-purpose tribal blocks.[22]

Integration according to R. Linton is the "mutual adjustment between culture elements".[23] This should be viewed in its functional aspect as pointed out by B. Malinowski and also its configurational aspect, that represents the psychological approach to cultural integration as given by Ruth Benedict.

The former two approaches of isolationism and assimilation have been abandoned in favour of integration. It is accepted by all social scientists that isolation of any cultural group means stagnation and even decay because no single cultural group can invent enough to maintain its dynamism. Interculture transmission or borrowing is the secret of cultural development and enrichment. "If every human group had been left to climb upward by its own unaided efforts," Linton states, "progress would have been so slow that it is doubtful whether any society by now would have advanced beyond the level of the Old Stone Age".[24]

Assimilation on the other hand aims at uniformity and thus denies separate identity to the tribal people. It induces them

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[22] *Report of Special Multi-purpose Tribal Block Committee*, New Delhi, 1960, pp. 13–14.

[23] R. Linton, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

[24] R. Linton, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

to forget and even detest their past for if they continue to like it they will never be assimilated. This makes them rootless and the nation will lose some of the valuable traits of tribal culture.

The process of integration permits the various groups to retain their separate identity but also develop creative adjustments with one another. Through such adjustment they will become one and yet remain separate. For this the best example is the human body which even though is composed of different members is yet one body. The same is aimed for the rest of the country. One is surprised to see the differences of food, dress, customs, festivals, and religious practices, between the North, South, East and West of India. Yet there is something both functional and psychological that integrates all these varying entities and gives expression to the Indian culture.

At present the differences between the tribal groups and the rest of the country are so great that any adjustment between the two will be pregnant with harmful consequences. Such as one type of adjustment between an authoritarian husband and an ignorant wife is possible when the wife becomes submissive. There is some truth in the advice: "Marry her young, keep her ignorant, treat her harshly and there will be perfect harmony at home." But it is not a creative adjustment and is similar to the one which the tribals made in the past when they came in contact with the non-tribals.

Therefore, in order to have creative adjustments the tribals have to be brought up to a certain level of education, economy, agriculture and health. How this goal is being reached has been briefly stated in Chapter III of *The Report of Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks Committee*, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, 1960. By this the tribal communities will be helped to grow to that point when they will make their distinctive contribution to the Indian culture.

By the introduction of the new cultural traits, their own cultural configuration will, no doubt, be disturbed but with proper planning it will soon regain its lost equilibrium. In any changing society there is this constant rythm of integration and disintegration but to minimise the stresses and strains of disintegration the changes introduced will be evolutionary rather than revolu-

tionary. This means that, for example, any new educational system will grow out of the indigenous system.

Lastly, integration is a dynamic concept, a process, and not something that once achieved will continue to exist. Therefore, internal and external integration will be an on-going process because anything that is living is making renewed adjustments with its surroundings. The only place where no further adjustments need to be made is the grave. If this is so, then will the tribal groups require continual assistance and protection as given at present? The answer is no. They will in time to come become, as the economist will say, self-perpetuating—*i.e.*, they will maintain and renew their adjustments with the rest of the nation all by themselves—not the adjustment between an exploiter and the exploited but between partners.

IMPACT OF MODERN LIFE ON TRIBAL CULTURE AND THE NEW GOAL TO WORK FOR

By Nirmal Minz,* *Ranchi*

To understand the impact of modern life on tribal culture we have to look at the past and present conditions of each item of cultural life among the tribal people of India. My approach to the subject is a popular one. So there will not be any systematic presentation of the subject. I shall limit myself to my own tribe, the Oraon tribe. I do this simply because I know the life of my tribe better than those of others. I have had very little chance to study and know other tribal people of India.

The Oraons form the second or the third major tribal group of India. The 1951 Census indicates that the Oraons all over India are about 11 lakhs. They are primarily cultivators of land. Some Oraons, particularly those who have migrated from Chotanagpur and adjacent areas to Assam and Bengal, are labourers in the tea gardens.

The heavy concentration of the Oraon population is found in the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts in West Bengal, Purnia Ranchi and Palamu districts in Bihar, Raigarh and Surguja districts in M.P., and Sundargarh and Sambalpur districts of Orissa. Only in the last month I had the opportunity to make an extensive tour of these districts in Bengal, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. It is a matter of satisfaction and joy to know that the Christian Church has penetrated into all these districts with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, all the tribes in Chotanagpur, Santal Paraganas and adjacent areas have been touched by the Christian gospel. Except for a few tribes like the Birhors and the Ashurs the Christian Church is established among all the other tribes. When I say Christian Church, I include the Roman Catholic Church too. The major part of Christian Oraons is Roman Catholic and after them comes the Lutheran Church to which I belong. It is a matter of gratitude to God that among the tribes of this area, the Oraons accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ first, and the first four Oraons were baptized on 9th of June 1850. This date gives us an idea as to the length of time that the Christian service has been rendered to the Oraon tribe. For the

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* The Rev. Prof. Nirmal Minz is on the staff of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Ranchi, Bihar. This is the paper he presented at the Consultation on *A Christian Approach to Tribal Communities in India Today* (Rajpur, June 1961) revised by the author in the light of criticisms and comments.

last one hundred and eleven years the Church is serving the Oraons and other neighbouring tribes in this central part of India.

What are the different forces of modern life and their impact on my tribe? The description will be true of all the neighbouring tribes—the Mundas, the Santals, the Kharias, and the Hos as well as the other minor tribes in the area.

I. Forces of Modern Life and their Impact

(*i*) *Mining and Factories.*—The five districts of Chotanagpur—Ranchi, Singhbhum, Dhanbad, Huzaribagh, and Palamu, and the adjacent areas—the Santal Paraganas District, areas in Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh are full of mineral wealth. Iron, coal, manganese, and so on are found in abundance. Besides, there are rivers and waterfalls which are necessary for factories and industries. The Tata Iron and Steel Factory, Rourkela Steel Plant, Muri Aluminium Factory, the Hatia Heavy Engineering Corporation and the future Bokaro Steel Plant are at the very heart of the tribal population in this area. Hatia and Rourkela are in the midst of the Oraon population. What have these mines and factories done to my people? (*a*) First of all they have snatched away our precious lands. Land is the greatest and most precious possession of the Oraons and other tribes. If you have a piece of land then you are fortunate, if you have none you can be the most unfortunate person in the world. That is why at the time of negotiations for marriage, the first enquiry was made as to how much land the boy owned. This was one of the deciding factors in marriage relations. But now Hatia, Rourkela and other factories and mining centres have taken away our lands. The Oraon people have become displaced persons in their own home. They have been resettled beside the heavy factories and been given huts to live in and around the mining centres. Their village is gone. The Sarna, the Oraon worship place, is destroyed; social life is disintegrated; values of life have been changed. My people have become an uprooted group with no solid base for their existence. Their birth-right has been taken away. The sense of security and permanency is gone. The people are unskilled labourers and so they have very little earning. During the early period of digging a mine they are wanted. The first stage of factory work demands the physical labour of my people and when the mines use modern machines and tools, factories work with skilled labourers, and the Oraons and other tribal labourers are retrenched. They are forced to surfdom and beggary and to work as coolies and servants of the babus in the mines and the factories. In the majority of cases this is even now true and it will be much more serious when Hatia and Bokaro will be in full swing.

(*ii*) *Literacy and Schooling.*—We are happy that literacy among the Oraons and other tribes of Chotanagpur and adjacent areas has been spread by the Church, the Government and other private agencies. Schools and colleges have been established at the very heart of tribal people. The Ranchi University is supposed to be the best welfare instrument of the tribals in that area. Ranchi is at the very centre of Oraon population. Women's education among the tribals in Bihar is highest in the State. Primary, middle and high schools are opened and run by the people themselves. Colleges are managed by private, public and Government agencies. The most unfortunate thing is that in spite of the high percentage of literacy and in spite of numerous schools and colleges and one University, there is very little education among the Oraon tribe. Many of our men and women have gone through middle schools. Quite a few have finished their high school and a few of us have gone through colleges and university. The result of literacy among us has been the creation of a middle class, even an elite group in the tribe who have no love for the land. Most of us live in Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Rourkela, some in Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay and other big cities of India. The result is that the Oraon tribe in the villages are left without educated leadership; and our brethren in the village are still struggling at the margin of existence. Old social customs and practices mean very little to us. The city and the modern ways of life have bewitched us thoroughly. The Government offer of tribal scholarships for college and university students have been a curse in disguise. Seriousness of study is gone, luxurious living has captured the youth, and the spirit of service to their own people is vanishing. The so-called educated tribals, even the Christians, have become an instrument of exploitation among the Oraons and other tribals. The Tahsildars, the teachers, the lawyers, the magistrates, all have succumbed to the temptation of the non-tribal world and they have begun to loot their own people. This is the saddest part of the story in the impact of modern life. Misappropriation of public funds by social, political or even religious leaders among the Oraons are current stories among the high circles. Oraon tribal society has been weakened considerably because of this educated middle class within it. The integrity of home and family is shaken to the very root because in the next generation there will be practically no one to manage the affairs at home. Middle class has a great charm for babugiri.† For this reason agriculture and family solidarity are being destroyed, and the Oraons have to face new economic, social, moral and spiritual problems. A dissatisfaction, a hunger for money and prestige and fashion are working in the individuals, in families, and in the tribe as a whole.

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† Work in offices.

(*iii*) *Second World War and Military Occupation of our Area.*—Ranchi proper had been made the centre of Eastern Command during the Second World War. The three mission compounds at Ranchi, the open roadside areas in the country and in the districts were occupied by military for five or six years continuously. Schools had to be closed down, villages were dislocated. Many tribal Oraon young men and women joined the military service. The villagers came in contact with the soldiers in the construction and regular services at the camps. High rate of wages drew the villagers to work in the camps. Some people neglected cultivation, some young men and women joined the military service without the consent of the parents and elders. They joined the navy, the air force, the infantry and so on. Young girls worked in the W.A.C. This brought many family, social and moral problems. There arose the tug between the young and old. The youth having gone round the country and even outside India knew better than the old ones what life was like. The old people took shelter under their long experience and would never budge an inch. The young girls knew better than the old mother and father, what courtship and marriage meant. So illegitimate children appeared in the society. Families broke and this affected the rest of the cultural life. More money was available because the price of rice and other food materials went up. Money was used for good and bad purposes. Modern drinking became prevalent among the middle class and was brought down even to the village level.

(*iv*) *Inroad of the Non-tribals.*—It is true that the Oraons have been in contact with the non-tribals, the Hindus and the Muslims for a long time. But the settled Hindus and Muslims did not interfere with the inner life of the tribals. They adjusted themselves and lived side by side.

The introduction of railways, roadways and airways to our areas and the establishment of big factories, the University and other Central Government offices at Ranchi have drawn the non-tribals to our midst. The Government multi-purpose blocks, community development schemes and the refugee resettlements have taken at least one non-tribal from outside the tribal area to each village of the Oraons. The village teacher or Gramsevak, Circle officer or the B.D.O., the Punjabi truckwala, the clerk, the police, the forest guard, the officer and others are practically non-tribals. Along with the non-tribals of India, their social customs and practices, their religious teaching and philosophies have been brought to the doors of the Oraons. It appears to me that a great army of the non-tribal people is going to invade the life and culture of the Oraons and other tribes. One of the most discouraging thing is that these non-tribals are moneyed men and they are bying the lands of the tribals

and are settling down permanently. Gradually the precious land of the Oraon and other tribes are going into the hands of the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs and other communities. This process of legal victimisation of the tribe, if continued for about half a century, will uproot the Oraon and other tribes and they will be a baseless people. The welfare agencies, either government or private, have also been a means of exploitation of the Oraons and other tribals in the area with which I am concerned. This infiltration of the non-tribals has made the problem of the Oraon life more complicated. The Oraon people seem to be bewildered in this mess of social and cultural contacts with the non-tribals.

(*v*) *Growth of Cities and Towns at the District, Sub-divisional and Police Station Headquarters.*—Urban life is accompanied by many forces of modern life—education, the cinema, printing and publications and above all trade and commerce. These institutions also draw together people from different parts of the world. The forces thus released are neither good nor bad in themselves but the way they have made an impact upon us the Oraons is noteworthy. We have seen the impact of literacy. The cinema, popular novels and periodicals have captured the mind and heart of the youth of my tribe. The Oraons who live within the radius of about 4 to 5 miles of the Ranchi city and other towns in our area, especially young people, have been spending their meagre earnings in visiting the cinema and buying the popular novels which are unhealthy for the proper growth of personality. The habit of drinking, not the traditional Hari but Daru, is found quite prevalent among the youth. Money economy, with its trade and commerce, has brought many problems for the Oraons. For one thing, people have little idea of the market prices of their own goods. I have seen the wholesale dealers of vegetables buying or taking by force from the villagers at the cheapest rate possible. Undue advantage is taken by the Marwaris and the Banias of the simplicity and honesty of the Oraons. The bad results have been that my people are learning dishonesty, learning how to cheat and deceive. These activities have been going on day by day for a long time, for well over a century on a wider scale.

(*vi*) *Christianity.*—The entrance of the Christian missions in the middle of the 19th century has made a great impact on the Oraon life and culture. In fact, I would say that of all the forces of change we have mentioned Christian missions can be called one of the most effective one. As I have mentioned already, there is no area of Oraon population where the Church has not come in. Whatever good it has done to my tribe has been evaluated in theological terms. It may also be culturally valuable to us in the long run. But from the short-range cultural point

of view, Christian missions have been a disorganising force in many respects.

Firstly the impact of Christian missions have destroyed tribal solidarity. Before the Christian missions came we could call ourselves an Oraon tribe. But now, we are divided into Roman Catholic Oraon, Lutheran Oraon, the Anglican Oraon and the rest. So my tribe has been broken into so many pieces.

Secondly, the traditional, social and cultural institutions (the Dhumkuria, the dance, the Parha, etc.) were discarded, because we were told that they had a satanic association.

II. Churches and Other Voluntary Welfare Agencies at Work

There are three major Churches working among the Oraons. These Churches have had slightly different approaches and emphases in their forms and means of Christian service. The Lutheran Church has what may be called a congregational approach, and it gave primary importance to the formation of Christian congregation, with schools and hospitals accompanying it. The Anglican Church has an institutional approach; it established fine schools and some hospitals too, along with the establishment of Churches. The Roman Catholic Church combines both approaches; it went on with the setting up of Churches or congregations as well as setting up of first rate primary, middle and high schools and even colleges, and building most famous hospitals like Mandar hospital 16 miles west of Ranchi proper. Besides these the Roman Catholic Church founded co-operative societies for the economic uplift of the Christian Oraons. The Lutheran Church also had co-operative societies in the beginning but gradually they disappeared.

So, the major forms and means of Christian service in the past have been schools, hospitals and co-operative societies. In spite of shortcomings, they rendered great service to the people. But it is difficult to answer how far these forms of service have contributed to the tribal social development of the Oraons. Surely, the schools have given our people education to make us equal with the non-tribals; the hospitals have relieved us from our many physical sufferings; the co-operative societies have saved us from the clutches of the money-lenders. Yet, it seems there has been very little social development if I understand this term correctly. But before we enter into the discussion of tribal social development and the new forms and means of Christian service necessary for it, we have to take note also of the non-Christian and secular agencies of service among the Oraon tribe.

The Ramakrishna Mission is serving the Oraons and other tribal people of the above-mentioned area with schools and hospitals. To

the poor and needy, they give free treatment and schooling too. The Adimjati Sevak Mandal started by Thakkar Bappa has schools and hostels all over the area. I know the schools and hostels run by this body in the Oraon areas. The schooling, boarding and lodging are free. This is a semi-government welfare agency working hard for the uplift of the Oraons and other tribals. The Government also is serving the people through schools, hospitals, dispensaries and co-operative societies; particularly the grain gola has been introduced among the tribals of Chotanagpur. The multi-purpose blocks and community development centres are increasing day by day.

Now let us come to the question, what social development these Christian and non-Christian services have brought about? In one sense, all these forms of service have been means of exploitation of the Oraon people. Wherever there is exploitation there cannot be social development but only social degradation. Perhaps this is too harsh a judgment of Christian and non-Christian services. Yet let me try to explain what I mean by exploitation of social life.

The Christian schools robbed us of one of the basic institutions of the Oraons. The Dhumkuria institution which is and was an age-old educational institution has been uprooted by the incoming of the western system of education—the acquaintance with 3-rs. This has deprived us of our social solidarity and an all-round training for life. The hospitals and the dispensaries did us good in many ways; but we have been deprived of the tribal genius in the field of medicine. No scope was given for the development of its resources; deshi medicine was associated with satanic power and discarded.

The co-operative societies did not pay attention to the village banks—in kind and also in cash. The co-operative societies were established not on the basis of the village, but on the basis of the congregation. The old village bank is practically gone and the new co-operative society is not so effectively functioning.

The pressures of service-agencies have destroyed the devotion of the Oraons to the traditional codes of behaviour and morality, without putting anything more satisfying in their place. The result is the loss of simplicity, honesty and stability of sexual behaviour of tribal interpersonal relationships; and demoralisation, exploitation, bribery and ill-treatment are rampant. When such things are going on within a society, it is very difficult to speak of social development. In fact, in all honesty as a Christian tribal I say a social disintegration is going on through the present forms and means of Christian and non-Christian services.

III. Meaning of Change for Us

Listening at the descriptive part of this paper one may get the feeling that I am against all change, that I prefer my old tribal life and culture to the new society that is going to appear in our land. Far from it.

'Change' in the Oraon tribal society cannot be checked; my people have to face these forces of change within and around us. We do not have to be discouraged by the bewildering situation they have created; what we need is to find meaning and purpose in it, to be enabled to look at the great cultural upheaval of today as the birth-pangs of a new society, as the present pain for a future gain. We have to live through this pain and suffering; but our living through this process of change must be a responsible one. It means controlling the changes that are taking place in tribal society so that the potentiality for good inherent in them may manifest itself and find fruition. It is thus that the present terrible experience of social disintegration of my people can lead to a new social integration on a new level. Let us look at the forces of change from this angle.

(1) It is true that the formal modern education has to a large extent alienated us from the life and thought of our own people. But we must not forget that this modern education has opened before us a world that we never knew before—the world of science, history, politics, philosophy and religion. It is amazing how a tribe isolated from the mainstream of Indian culture, has within a short span of time picked up the threads of thought and life of the educated world today. The last two years' record of Oraon students in Bihar and Ranchi Universities is amazing—an Oraon girl got a gold medal in Zoology in B.Sc.; an Oraon boy this year stood first in the University in Anthropology. Among the tribals of Chotanagpur an Oraon, the late Mr. D. M. Panna, became the first Deputy Magistrate. Today, Oraon young men and women are able to stand equal with their non-tribal friends. One of the Oraons trained in England is appointed as the Superintending Engineer in the Hatia Heavy Engineering Corporation. In government, and private services and in the Church there are well-qualified men and women serving in various capacities. Modern forces have pushed us out and placed us among the non-tribals. It is this educated group of men and women, the lawyers in the courts, the men in the offices, the ministers in the churches, the politicians in the Assemblies and Councils—who are learning to live in community and learn together the complications of advanced social life. It is an amazing experience for our Oraon people and other tribals in our area that life in the wider world is lived on a different level than what our forefathers used to do.

(2) Industry, mining, urban life, and other forces have pushed on us out of our habitat. Our attachment to land and family is shaken. We are compelled by these forces to think other possible patterns of economic life. Money economy is teaching us to be more vigilant in what we do with our food materials. We know that our neighbours are not friendly and helpful but they are our neighbours after all. We cannot any more by-pass them and live alone in our isolated homeland. These forces have brought us an opportunity to use not only our body but also our mind to make a decent living.

(3) Besides Christianity, other religions also have entered the area and we are placed in a situation of religious pluralism that is crucial for our future. As a group we have accepted Christianity, and recognize the good it has done to us; now the non-Christian welfare agencies are doing exactly the same things as the Christian Church did and is doing. With various religious forces working among my people the demand to make religion a matter of responsible personal decision has been felt.

We are compelled to think through and act upon our personal decisions in other spheres of life also. With the gradual break-up of familial and tribal solidarity, we are in search of a community and solidarity that will give us a sense of security and permanence in the midst of change.

The social customs and religious ordinances characteristic of the Oraons and other tribes are ineffective in this age and are receding to the background. The problem now is: what shall we do with our traditional cultural heritage? We cannot throw it away completely, we cannot keep it in the face of change, and we have not begun to select the good out of it with discrimination; therefore we are bewildered. Our cultural heritage cannot be forgotten; it will live in our memory from generation to generation. Nor is it advisable for us to discard it. What we need is a new interpretation of our tribal culture, a new evaluation of it in the light of certain norms for our future life. It is a difficult task but sooner or later we have to take it seriously. Otherwise we will be completely crushed by the forces of change.

IV. New Goal to Work For

What is the right direction for the tribals particularly the Oraons? Little thought has been given to this question. The Government, the social workers and the social scientists suggest that tribal people be integrated into the national life of India. This is the right goal, but what is the right form of integration. No doubt, it is difficult to be precise. But integration should not mean the loss of the identity of the Oraon tribe. It would be annihilation and not integration. The task

of integration within the tribe and with others outside raises several fundamental questions.

Firstly, how can the tribe as a whole move towards this goal of national integration when we are divided into Christian and non-Christian Oraons. This division handicaps us to move together with a single mind towards the goal. One of the leading non-Christian Oraons, the late Sri. Rai Sahib Bandi Ram Oraon, used to say, "If we have to compete and catch up with other people, if we have to improve our lot, the whole tribe must be completely non-Christian or completely Christian". In an age of personal religious freedom it is impossible to return to the traditional equation of religion and communal solidarity. In any case, for the Christian Oraons, to go back to their old Oraon religion is impossible and unthinkable. We have to move forward recognising the possibility of a social and cultural unity based on an acknowledgement of the plurality of religions. Indeed, we have to work for the creative integration of a composite society and culture.

Secondly, what are the resources of responsible living in the modern world available to our tribe? And how can they help build a modern community life for us in India today? In order to get right answers to these fundamental questions, we look all around us and within us. In Chotanagpur area there appear three basic resources of power for life.

(*a*) The first is the old Oraon and other tribal heritages, social, cultural and religious. The Oraon tribe can very well think of building its life on the resources of the traditional Oraon culture even in modern India. But the resources are too inadequate to help us cope with the forces of change. There is no written record of Oraon religion and history that can inspire us in our daily living. The social customs and practices, the ethical and religious values are fast changing. The social structure of the Oraon tribe is not able to give us the true meaning of personality today. The old Oraon tribal cultural heritage by itself is quite inadequate as a basis for responsible community living for the future.

(*b*) The Hindu and the Muslim cultural heritages have been present among us, for more than four or five centuries. But unfortunately neither Hindu, nor the Muslim cultural heritages have penetrated the life of the Oraons. These have remained quite isolated from their life and thought. The Oraons have had no access to the Hindu Temples and the Muslim Mosques. The Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Gita and the Upanishads and the Koran have no hold at all among the Oraons. Only recently, the Hindu culture is influencing the non-Christian Oraons in the form of nationalism. So we are unable to base

our future goal and community life on the Hindu or Muslim cultural heritage.

(*c*) The Christian Gospel and the heritage of the New Israel, the Church, as we have seen, have been at work among the Oraons and other tribals in Chotanagpur, since 1845, that is, for over a century. By now, there is no geographical area inhabited by the Oraons where the Church is not planted. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has penetrated into all these areas. The written word of God has gone into the hearts and homes of the Oraons. The spoken word of God has filled the air breathed by my people. The community of believers has been established among the Oraons. Christ has become one Gotra with and the Lord of, the Oraons.

A witness to this fact by a Hindu friend is worth noting here. In a conversation he told me and others that for the last forty years he had thought that Christianity was destroying the life of the tribal people. And he was one of them who worked to weaken the hold of Christianity among them. But his experience has taught him that Christianity alone has given life and hope to the lifeless and the hopeless tribals, and it would be foolish to root Christianity out of the tribal areas. This opinion appeared to me very significant.

Indeed Christianity can provide a sound basis for a new humanism and a new structure of community. It can be and is a major and fundamental source of power for responsible reorientation of Oraon life at the present time. Let us, however, not forget that this new social structure must be enriched by Tribal, Hindu and Muslim heritages. In a sense the major enrichment should come from the tribal religious and cultural heritage reinterpreted in the light of the Gospel. The Churches of Chotanagpur should engage themselves in a careful study, evaluation and adaptation of it.

To achieve this end, the Church should play a vital role of bridging the gulf between the rural people and the educated tribals in the cities. The interaction between them can play a dynamic role in social development and cultural integration. A group of educated tribal men and women alive to the problems and tasks of social integration can be an effective instrument to minimise the disorganisation and to channel the change in the right direction.

SOME NOTES ON RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN NAGALAND*

I. Modern Forces of Change

The coming of administration and authority, beginning with the British in the middle of the 19th century, and continuing and expanding under the independent Government of India down to the present time. For an outline of the history of the extension of the administration see Dr. Elwin's book *Nagaland*.

2. The advent and spread of Christianity. The rapid expansion of Christianity among the Nagas dates from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, though many of the tribes did not receive teaching on an extensive scale until comparatively recently.

3. Gradually increasing contacts with the outside world. Involved in this process are several different factors such as the following: (i) The influence and example of the British officers (who by their way of life brought an insight into a new type of civilisation—a factor often given insufficient weight in current discussions). (ii) The influence and example of the Christian missionaries from the same point of view (but it must be kept in mind that the missionaries were never as numerous in the hills as the Government officers). (iii) The spread of education and literacy which opened up new areas of knowledge of what was going on beyond the Naga Hills and even beyond India altogether. (iv) The two world wars, especially the Second, which brought Nagas into direct contact with large numbers of people from overseas and made them much more acutely conscious of the world at large. (v) The experiences of Nagas who have had opportunities to travel abroad—the number of these people has been steadily increasing.

4. As a consequence of (1) above, and to a lesser extent (2) but of sufficient importance to warrant separate mention—the cessation of head-hunting. This practice was so intimately bound up with so much of Naga life and culture that when it was brought to an end radical changes in certain directions were inevitable.

5. The recent disturbances and subsequent government action. The situation of the immediate past has brought an intensified sense of unity which has meant a new overreaching of tribal boundaries, as

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* A paper contributed for preparatory reading of the participants of the Rajpur Consultation (report elsewhere).

well as further contacts with the outside and the more rapid spread of the realisation of what is going on in other parts of the country and the world.

This list is not exhaustive by any means if for no other reason than that each of the sections could have been broken up into significant sub-sections of considerable importance in their own right. But what has been stated will give some idea of forces of change in general, and will provide a background for reference in what follows.

Something by way of explanation must be said in passing about the extent of influence emanating from the culture and civilisation which can be called distinctively Hindu. The point is that for an area contiguous with large areas of non-tribals, this influence has been surprisingly small. This is true of most of the tribal people of Assam, in contrast with their brethren in other parts of the country. It must be understood, for example, that the Assam tribal groups have never been regarded as being in any way involved in Hinduism. This is due to a number of factors, the most important being probably that the caste system is not very strong in Assamese Hinduism, and that the geographical and political situation in this part of India has kept the peoples of the hills and plains much more separate than has been usual in other areas in India. But even apart from this, in the Naga Hills in particular, the cultural, religious, and social influence of the plains-civilisation has been remarkably slight. One reason for this would be that there have never been at any time very large numbers of plains-people living in the Naga Hills, partly because originally the area was extremely dangerous, and partly because since the advent of administration the "inner line" and various other regulations have effectively prevented infiltration and settlement. As a result of this the Nagas have never suffered from that exploitation by merchants and money-lenders which has beggared the lives of other Indian tribal groups. At present in Nagaland there are very few plains-Indians apart from Government officers. There are some Marwari traders, a few Nepalis, and so on, but the tendency of Naga opinion is if anything, to restrict the entry of these people even more in the future. There has been some, though not much, inter-marrying, but this usually results in the Naga member leaving the hills rather than in the non-Naga settling there.

II. Change in the Social Systems of the Nagas

1. *The Morungs.*—Traditionally in many Naga villages, the unmarried young men lived separately in large dormitory houses known as "morungs". The purpose of this separation was manifold. Probably the primary idea was protective and disciplinary. In the head-hunting days the villages tended to be in a constant state of alert

against attack, and it was necessary to have a disciplined band of young warriors ready in case of emergency. The morungs were therefore the "guard houses" of the villages, and in them the young men lived according to a fairly strict code of discipline. But the morungs were also a kind of recreational "club" for the Naga youths, and often acted as centres of art and tribal culture. It has frequently been stated that there is a tendency for the morungs to disappear from Naga life, and this is regarded by many outside the Hills as a great loss socially and culturally to the Nagas. Now there is some truth in these ideas, but perhaps not quite as much as one would sometimes imagine from the arguments one reads in books. And, it must be remarked, the influence of Christianity has not been quite as detrimental in this respect as is sometimes alleged. It is true that in some areas Christian villages tend to abandon the morungs. But it is also true, and this point is not usually made by writers on this subject, that in other areas the Church itself is careful to introduce and to supervise its own "morung" type system. In many Christian villages there is a "boarding" system for unmarried young men which is not unlike the old morung arrangement, though of course any associations with non-Christian practices are eliminated. Nor is it to be accepted uncritically that the cessation of the morung set-up inevitably means a drop in moral standards. There are some reports of a fall in morality in recent times where the morungs have been given up, but it is unwise to attribute this wholly or even mainly to the passing of the morungs in view of the great increase in other factors of change at the same time. There is a downward trend in moral standards in many places where no morungs have ever existed and where no system of that kind has ever been enforced. While the morungs may have helped to strengthen standards if they had been kept up, it is probable that the lowering of standards must be sought elsewhere than in the mere fact that the elimination of the morungs has been associated in time with a weakening of morals. In this kind of matter it is possible to be guilty of the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy very easily unless one is careful. And it must be remembered that the breakdown of the morung system may have come even apart from Christianity, in so far as the basic element in its rationale, head-hunting, has now disappeared. Given this situation and the spread of education and of modern ideas of the place and attitude of young people in general, it is by no means certain that Christianity can be regarded as the chief disruptive force in this respect. The fact that Christianity and education usually go hand in hand in the Naga Hills often makes it difficult to assess how much in the process of change is due to Christianity and how much to the mere spread of new ideas, and indeed how much the two work co-operatively or in antagonism in producing the changes which are made. This problem is one which will come up more than

once in this discussion. In regard to the morungs, I do not think the present situation is sufficiently simple to enable anyone to say to the Church, "You should maintain or revive the morungs for the sake of discipline and culture among Naga young people". This may be in the same class as the idea that flogging should be reintroduced to curb juvenile delinquency or that a revival of the gymnasium in Greece would help to promote discipline and culture among the young people of that country. What must be realised is that other forces besides Christianity are at work in Nagaland, and these must also be taken fully into consideration in any question of this kind.

2. *Marriage Customs.*—Marriage customs vary considerably from tribe to tribe among the Nagas, and I do not propose to discuss them in detail here. I want only to note one or two interesting points regarding present conditions and trends. Among non-Christian Nagas the marriage bond cannot be said to be particularly strong, and it is not necessarily long-lasting. Divorce is comparatively easy. This situation has, naturally enough, been considerably affected by the coming of Christianity. For Christian Nagas divorce is not recognised officially by the Church (as a general rule), and the marriage bond is accepted as a lifelong one, especially if it is sanctioned by the Church as Christian. I think it can be safely said that at this point Christianity has been morally and socially beneficial to the Nagas. It is interesting to note also that among certain tribes the practice of demanding and receiving a dowry was, and to some extent still is, quite common. Among the Semas, for example, the amount even goes as high as Rs. 10,000 at times. This practice is now being resisted by the Church, although it is not easy to stamp it out (as the Government of India is also finding among Hindus). The arrangement of marriage was in former times left to the guardians of the couple concerned, but there is a tendency nowadays for the young people themselves to take much more of the initiative, although the approval of the guardians is still required. This is a trend discernible all over India and is certainly not a distinctively "tribal" phenomenon. Its cause is probably to be sought in the spread of education and the wider dissemination of ideas from other parts of the world.

3. *Dress.*—This is a topic that is accorded considerable significance by present-day anthropologists and social workers, and some interesting observations may be made regarding it with respect to the Nagas. Broadly speaking the present position is this. In the villages among ordinary Nagas with little education dress remains very largely what it has always traditionally been. There have of course been developments over the years, but I think it should be emphasised that these have generally been non-Western. The Nagas have a great regard for their hand-woven cloth with its distinctive colours and patterns,

and this predominates in the village scene. It is sometimes alleged that becoming a Christian meant automatically exchanging this colourful dress for a dirty pair of shorts or the like. This is a gross exaggeration and certainly does not follow today. Shorts there are of course among village Christians, but there is also plenty of the traditional dress also, and for that matter of the traditional ornaments and hair-cut as well. And, it must be remembered, even the Naga who takes to shorts and shirt has his blanket which is his chief source of warmth. This idea that traditional dress is dying out among Christian Nagas is one which is apparently based upon contacts with Nagas who live either in the towns of Nagaland or on the plains. Now it is true that here one finds predominantly Western dress among Naga men (though not among the women, who still use almost exclusively the Naga skirt). But there are factors involved which must be borne in mind before too hasty judgments are made. Firstly, traditional Naga village dress is rather scanty except for the cloth which is thrown round the shoulders. It is frankly inconceivable that a young man could go to college or work in a Government office clad in only a small piece of cloth hanging from his waist and a cloth thrown round his upper body. What then is he going to wear? He has no liking for the dhoti, and it is only to be expected that he will choose trousers and shirt. But to infer from this that he has "gone Western" as a result of the influence of Christianity seems to me to be grossly unfair and simply not true. My investigations suggest that education has had a bigger part to play in trends in change of dress than Christianity in itself. It is sometimes categorically stated that the missionaries made the Nagas change their dress and manner of cutting their hair. No doubt some cases of this could be cited. But what is not usually mentioned is that some missionaries emphatically resisted this tendency. One missionary at least who conducted a school in a major centre in the Naga Hills refused to award prizes for merit to any Naga boy who did not dress in Naga clothes and cut his hair in Naga fashion. It is too easily assumed that any tendencies to "Westernisation" among the Nagas are the outcome of the influence of the missionaries. But it is forgotten that the Nagas saw more of British officials and of Westernised Indians than they saw of missionaries. The writer of these notes has himself heard Naga young men affirm that the reason they wanted to leave behind the traditional Naga dress and graduate to shirt and trousers was that they might emulate the British officers whom they regarded as standing at the pinacle of human culture and achievement. What must be realised is that under present conditions in the world there are going to be changes in dress among tribal people, if for no other reason than that their entry into wider society would be impossible in the limited clothing they traditionally wear. And to try to tell the tribal that he has no right to make these changes

or that he is betraying his culture if he does is nonsense. Where in the villages questions of health are involved, then of course some guiddance along hygienic lines becomes necessary. And it is good and right that as many as possible of the colourful tribal motifs should be preserved (as they are in fact being preserved in the cloths which even the best educated Nagas keep and use). But we must avoid scrupulously being misled by an airy romanticism into imposing upon the tribal people principles of dress and culture relationships which are clearly impracticable in the modern world.

4. *Christian-non-Christian Relationships.*—Christian missions have sometimes been accused of introducing division into tribal life by the distinction which inevitably arises between those who accept and those who do not accept the missionary's message. In this connection attention is drawn to the tendency among some Naga tribes for Christians to withdraw from their former villages to begin new ones separated from those of their non-Christian brethren. It is true, of course, that this was done at times in the past, and it may have occasioned friction here and there. But before we criticise too harshly the methods of the early missionaries and tribal Christians, it is essential that their point of view should be understood. Firstly, the separation often came about because in the large non-Christian villages the Christians, who formed only a small minority, were subjected to severe persecution and discrimination and withdrawal became a matter of sheer survival as well as of maintaining the new faith. Then too the community life of the village was such that under the old conditions, involvement in compromising non-Christian practices was almost unavoidable so long as the Christians remained in the village. Any criticism at this point based on the accusation that Christianity is unduly separatist reveals of course a complete failure to understand what Christianity in fact is, and cannot be accepted as a legitimate criticism of mission methods. It is too readily assumed by some critics that the withdrawal of Christians from non-Christian villages involved an attitude of superiority towards non-Christians. Some of this attitude may have been present, but it is unlikely, at least, that it played a dominant part. More frequently it was a case of the Christians being forced to withdraw because of intolerable conditions or of actually being driven away as outcastes. What is the position today? Generally among the Nagas relations between Christians and non-Christians are good. In many places they live together in complete harmony, with the non-Christians tending to take over from the Christians many customs and practices without necessarily embracing the faith completely. It could be said that there is a tendency for non-Christians to have something of an "inferiority complex" towards the Christians, but it could hardly be said that this is altogether the fault of the Christians.

III. Some Points Regarding Cultural Activities

1. *Feasts of Merit*.—These feasts have been described by Dr. Elwin as one of the most important cultural factors in Naga life. They were traditionally given for the benefit of the whole village by the wealthy people in the village, and to those who made these generous gestures special honour was accorded, not only in this life but (so it was believed) in the next as well. There is no doubt that with the coming of Christianity these feasts were abandoned wherever the new faith was accepted. This loss has been strongly criticised in some quarters. However, again it is a question of understanding the point of view of the missionaries and the national Christians who found it necessary to insist that these feasts should go. The most obvious point is again that the feasts involved practices that were undoubtedly inconsistent with Christianity and its ideals. Sacrifices were made to the spirits, large quantities of rice-beer were consumed, and drunkenness was common. It was therefore considered improper for Christian villages to permit the feasts to be held. It must be noted again that any criticism of this becomes a criticism of Christianity itself, not just of methods of introducing Christianity, because there can be no doubt that in insisting that the feasts should stop, the missionaries and national leaders were only making the logical application of the faith they professed. It is perhaps true that something should have been put in place of the feasts, since they did constitute an important factor in the cultural life of the people. But it is not usually noted that to some extent the observance of the Christian year has in fact tended to provide substitutes for the feasts of merit. Christmas and Easter are, for example, great festive occasions for Christian Nagas, and great preparations are always made for them. They are invariably carried through with enthusiasm and excitement, and with those touches here and there which are distinctive to the Nagas, so that they could not be said to be simply copies of similar celebrations in the West. Then also in some tribes, it is the custom for the wealthy people of the village to sponsor and bear the expense of the festivities at such times as Christmas. And when all is said and done this is not so very far removed from what we might call a Christian substitute for the traditional feasts of merit. In fact there is more on the credit side for Christianity in the Naga Hills in this respect than is admitted in much of the writing that one reads on the subject. It is certainly possible for Christians to make Christmas and Easter just as significant culturally as the feasts of merit were and are to non-Christian society.

2. *Music, Art and Dancing*.—It is well known that the Nagas are peculiarly adept at these three cultural activities. Their music is particularly striking, especially to Western ears, because of the notable harmonies which are produced. In discussing these three aspects of

Naga culture, however, it must be admitted that Christianity as it has been practised in the hills can with most justification be criticised. It is an unfortunate fact that Christians in Nagaland have not developed anything like the wealth of Christian culture which could have been developed in these directions without in the least compromising their Christian profession. Nowadays there is a tendency in some areas to produce indigenous Christian music, and to a more limited extent, dancing. But much more needs to be done than has been done if the full potential of Naga culture is to be utilised in the service of the Church. In wood carving, for example, an art at which the Nagas are traditionally expert, very little has been attempted along Christian lines, and Church buildings are not nearly as decorative as they might be. Western patterns have been too readily accepted and followed. This has been partly due to the fact that much music, art, and dancing were originally associated with non-Christian practices, and to a desire to make a clean break with that aspect of the past. But it has been insufficiently realised that in such matters it is quite possible to take forms and adapt them without for one moment giving endorsement to traditional contents. It cannot be doubted that whereas the missionaries did great service to the Nagas in many respects educationally and culturally, particularly in the realm of literature, their outlook was at times too limited to enable them to appreciate fully the great possibilities for Christian development residing in many of the cultural activities which they regarded with suspicion. It is up to the present-day Naga Christian leaders to try to move positively in this direction for the sake of preserving a Church in Nagaland which is both definitely Christian and distinctively Naga at the same time.

3. *The Consumption of Rice-Beer.*—Christians have of course always taken a strong negative stand on the question of drinking rice-beer both among the Nagas and other N.E. Indian tribes. The argument of some anthropologists is that this is an unnecessarily puritanical deprivation, made more serious by the discovery that the liquor is very rich in food value and constitutes an important part of the tribal diet. It is a question worthy of discussion how far the Christian attitude is justified and can be maintained. The usual reason advanced for the prohibition is that rice-beer is generally taken in over-doses and results in drunkenness and immorality. And there is no doubt that there is considerable justification for the latter contention. For those who do not hold strong views regarding the effects of excess, it is natural that the nutritive aspect of the matter will be stressed. But it is difficult to see how a Christian can take any other stand than the traditional one, given prevailing conditions of tribal life, even though he may recognise with regret that prohibition will mean a loss from the point of view of dietetics.

The problem is accentuated however by the fact that in some areas the consumption of rice-beer is being openly advocated and encouraged by Government officials. What should the Christian response to this be? It must be positive as well as negative. Some substitute that is non-intoxicating should be found, if possible, in order to counter the accusation that the people are being robbed of an essential feature of their diet. Some are fond of pointing out that the missionaries took away the tribal's rice-beer (which is nutritively valuable) and gave him instead black tea (which is nutritively useless). And there is no doubt that this position is difficult to maintain unless the moral and social aspects of the Christian's contention can be backed also by concrete suggestions capable of meeting the argument based on diet and health.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES OF ASSAM*

By B. M. Pugh, *Shillong*

Assam, as many of you know, is a land of tribal communities. First of all, we have the Mombas, the Daflas, the Abors, the Mishmis, the Khamtis, the Konyak Nagas, and others occupying the mountainous regions bordering on Tibet, China and Burma, known as NEFA (North East Frontier Agency), all numbering about 5,00,000.

Secondly, we have the Aos, the Angamis, the Semas, the Rengmas and others now occupying the new State of Nagaland. These also may number about 3,50,000.

Thirdly, we have the Khasis, the Garos, the Mizos (formerly known as the Lushais), the Cacharis, the Mikirs, and others inhabiting the five Autonomous Districts known as the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills, the Mizo Hills, the North Cachar Hills and the Mikir Hills District respectively. These probably number about 13,00,000.

Fourthly, there are tribals all over the Brahmaputra Valley, who have now been absorbed into the Assamese-speaking community, the dominant Community in the State of Assam. These tribal communities in the Brahmaputra Valley are the Bodos, the Ahoms, the Mundas, the Santhalis, the Kochs and several others; but since they have been partially absorbed in the Assamese community, their number cannot now be properly ascertained. Even then, I do not think that they could be less than 10,00,000. The tribal population in the State of Assam therefore is about 29,00,000.

If we include Manipur and possibly Tripura also in our consideration, as these areas are geographically more closely connected with Assam than with any other State of India, then we shall have to take into account also the Meitheis (or Manipuri Hindus), the Kabuis, the Kukis, the Hmars, the Paites, the Mao Nagas, the Tangkhul Nagas, and many others who inhabit Manipur. These all number about 5½ lakhs.

In Tripura, which originally was a tribal State, there is even now a large number of tribal population of Tripurias, Mizos, Chakmas, etc. These probably number about 3 lakhs in all.

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* A paper read by the Rev. B. M. Pugh at the Rajpur Consultation reported elsewhere.

We thus have a very large tribal population in the North-Eastern region of India.† There is also a very large Christian population in this region numbering about 10,00,000 of which the large majority are tribals.

However the greatest concentration of Christians is in the Autonomous Districts—Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Mizo Hills and Garo Hills—and in the Nagaland. The number of Christians in the Mikir Hills, North Cachar Hills. Manipur and Tripura, and in the Brahmaputra Valley is small. while there are practically no Christians as yet in the whole of NEFA.

Christian work in this whole region began about the year 1840, that is. about 120 years ago. It may therefore be said that the progress of Christianization has been very rapid, especially if we remember that in some areas in this region Christian Missions were started only recently.

Reasons for the Rapid Spread of Christianity

I may venture several reasons for this rapid spread of the Christian religion in these tribal communities:

1. *The devotion of the early missionaries.*—There was no doubt at all that in those early days. missionaries would not dare to come out of their homes and countries unless they were extremely devoted people. The dangers which missionaries faced in those early days would discourage many a faint-hearted one. So once they began to get results, their tasks became much easier.

2. *The devotion of the early Christians.*—To become a Christian in those early days was not an easy task for any one. But when once they had decided to become Christians, they took up their religious responsibilities seriously. In that way they became good examples to others who soon decided to come into the fold with them.

3. *The spread of education.*—Literacy among the tribal Christians enabled the new converts to read the Bible and sing hymns. The reading of the Bible made them familiar with the foundations of this new religion, and this soon supplanted their old beliefs which were neglected as these had never been put in writing, nor codified.

The singing of hymns was in itself considered an achievement, and hymns were innovations which captured the fancies of the

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† *See* Appendix to this paper for classification by livelihood of population in some areas.

tribal people so that old beliefs and songs were soon discarded as outmoded.

The ability to read and write created a literate class, the most advanced of whom were even taken into Government service thus forming a part, although in a lower rank, of the ruling hierarchy. The influence of missionaries in securing good positions in Government service for educated Christians was an incentive to some to become Christians. Naturally these educated Christians were looked up to, and it thus became a fashion for others to follow in their footsteps. The terms "Christian" and "educated" soon became synonymous. Everything Christian was therefore looked up to, while non-Christian beliefs and practices among their own tribal people or of non-Christian Indians were held with contempt. This attitude is in some ways the genesis for the independence movement among the Nagas.

4. *The leadership of the Church.*—The training of indigenous leaders who soon wielded great influence in the community was another very great force in bringing many into the Christian fold. Native pastors of those early days were considered as stalwarts not only among the Christians but also in the tribal communities to which they belonged. They are even now so considered wherever the Christian gospel is being newly introduced. They are the torch-bearers of their respective tribal communities. But wherever that respect for the Christian leaders has ceased, to that extent the progress of Christianity has been checked. This slowing down of the spread of Christianity in the tribal areas in Assam, therefore, is taking place in such areas as in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District where there are leaders other than Christian in the community.

Reasons which Retarded the Progress of Christianity

Now that I have discussed the reasons for the spread of Christianity in the tribal areas in Assam, I should now consider the reasons which in my opinion have retarded that progress.

1. The present missionaries on the whole are no longer as devoted as were the early missionaries. Perhaps even before these new missionaries left their country, they knew that the dangers and difficulties which the early missionaries had to face were not there any more. They also probably believed that they were coming to a land where they would be welcome as the harbingers of light into this dark world, and even as members of a superior race. Their chief attention therefore in this rapidly-developing situation which they now find even in the tribal areas is to try to maintain that position in the community—that of the harbingers of light and members of a superior race. Missionaries in the tribal communities in Assam therefore either occupy positions of

prestige, or become frustrated and leave the country. All this does not help in the spread of Christianity.

2. The second and third generation Christians are no longer as devoted, or as dedicated, as the early Christians of the first generation. This is so because new ideals have in the meantime crept into the tribal societies. The glamour of wealth, position and all the paraphernalia that Christianity and Western culture bring with them have somewhat dampened their religious fervour; and our present-day generation of tribal Christians are mostly after that life which will bring wealth and the luxuries and pleasures of a modern society. When the tribal society has come to this stage, many turn to religion again as a result of despair and frustration, or because of their reaction to that kind of life which in the end did not give them happiness. Revivalism is often the result of such a reaction.

3. *The spread of education.*—As education becomes more widespread, and as it is no longer the monopoly of the Christians, non-Christian tribals no longer find that one should become a Christian in order to advance one's position in society. In fact the general national awakening has been exploited by some to oppose Christian beliefs and Christian people in general.

Non-Christian tribals are also encouraging the resurgence of the almost forgotten tribal songs and tribal dances which were once debarred from Christian society. Christians are also merrily taking part in them which give these practices and customs the sanction of the whole society; so that today Christian practices are not considered superior to tribal ways and tribal customs.

On the attitude of the early tribal Church towards tribal customs and tribal practices, my own opinion is that it was necessary at that time in order to form a separate society. Thus the Christian Church would ex-communicate sabbath-breakers, wine-bibbers, and even those who took part in tribal dances and in archery. Today these "sins" are being ignored, although the Church still frowns upon them.

That policy of separation or the mission-compound mentality is in most tribal areas no longer necessary, as it may breed the feeling of superiority or pharisaism which results in antagonism. The Church should be now ready to go out into the non-Christian world, and by example and precepts win over those who may see any good in these representatives of the Church.

It was that attitude of the early Church which has made non-Christians around us accuse the Christians as being denationalised. The same attitude is reflected in its present-day discountenancing all

associations of the members of the Christian community with the political and social activities in the life of the Nation.

4. *The loss of leadership of the Church.*—While it is true that in many tribal areas the Church till today has maintained its leadership, in areas where education has been more widespread Christian leadership has receded into the background. To some extent, lay leadership of the Christian community is still strong almost everywhere in the tribal areas where Christians are dominant; but the leadership of the clergy, a phenomenon which one witnessed up to almost two or three decades ago, is fast disappearing.

This is because the Church itself had not thought it fit in the latter days to have indigenous leaders who would command the respect not only of the members of their own flock but also of the non-Christian world. A highly educated ministry, or even a highly educated Christian community was not considered important, and in fact discouraged. The training for indigenous leadership was therefore sadly neglected. This attitude of the Church was partly due to the reluctance of foreign missionaries to disengage themselves from their positions of power and authority in the Church and in the community.

Main Issues Callinge for Re-thinking Today

1. The most important problem which tribal societies face today is the break-up of tribal culture and tribal society. In saying this, I do not suggest that the tribals should go back to their old customs and practices. No one today can try to put the clock back. Disintegration is bound to come with the spread of education, modern communications, industrialisation and the impact of other cultures. But one cannot but bemoan the fact that close-knitness or compactness which is characteristic of all tribal societies has now given place to individualism, competition, jealousies, and even cut-throat competition. These later developments are more prevalent among Christians than among non-Christian tribals who have not yet tasted the fruits of modern civilisation.

Individualism, as opposed to tribalism, gives rise to insecurity in many of the members of the tribe. Competition gives rise to frustration, as many find themselves detached from the moorings of a tribal society and are often unwanted in the world society into which they have been thrown; or as they find themselves unable to reach the goals which they have now set for themselves. Jealousies give rise to mental conflicts and moral confusion and the disintegration of personality; whereas cut-throat competition gives rise to lawlessness, criminality and a social climate very different from that in a tribal society. Need we wonder that in many a town there is an increasing number of psychopathic cases especially among the tribals.

2. The second important issue in my opinion is the fact that tribal Christians are losing their vision of their Christian destiny and are not conscious of their Christian responsibility in the life of the Nation. The slackening of the pace in evangelism is the result of this dimness in their vision; and their failure to take their proper share in the political and social life of the Nation is also due to this lack of consciousness.

There are several factors which contribute to this situation.

(1) Christianity among the tribals is often skin-deep: it is only a veneer and has no depth at all. This is because we do not have Christian leaders among the tribals who can present the great truths of Christianity and who can challenge the young educated people with the role each should play as a Christian in the destiny of our country.

(2) The second reason for this lack of consciousness is the meagre opportunities which are open to the young people at the end of their school or college career to provide them their proper place in society. They therefore, go through life, beginning with the life in school or college aimlessly, as they have the feeling that their aims and objectives in life cannot be achieved. This is so, again, because of our present system of education, as many a young man and young woman find the doors of opportunities closed as they leave the portals of their institution.

(3) The third important issue that is bothering tribal society in Assam today is the great variety of approaches of Christian and other religious sects, each claiming for itself to have the only perfect truth or the only way to salvation. These approaches not only bring discord but also confusion in the minds of the tribals, and ultimately that moral chaos which is so disruptive of society and even of personality.

4. The last, but not the least, important issue, which I should like to mention here is the new consciousness of freedom and dignity amongst the educated tribals in this region.

As long as these tribal communities were under British rule, there was very little interference from the Government, and very little also was being done for them. But with the achievement of independence the tribal people realised that there was going to be a change of masters who might interfere with their liberty and freedom and even rule over them with injustice. There was therefore in the period during the drawing up of the Indian Constitution varying intensities of political activities in the Hill Districts resulting in the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India for the six Hill districts including the Naga Hills. While these provisions did not satisfy any of the Districts, five of them in the end decided to try them out, while the Naga Hills District boycotted the elections and agitated for a status which has now resulted

in the formation of the sixteenth State of the Union, the Nagaland. But other hill tribes are now agitating for what they call "freedom from domination and injustice".

It would be quite wrong for the Christian leaders in India not to take notice of this movement. As responsible citizens of this country it is incumbent upon us to try to find a solution which will be just to the tribal people and best for the country as a whole. National integration of the tribal communities can only come as tribals have confidence in the justice of the National Government, and as it can free them from domination and injustice and from the shackles that now bind them.

APPENDIX

Population Classified by Livelihood Pattern (including dependent) according to 1951 Census

	K-J. Hills	Mizo Hills	Garo Hills	United Mikir and N.C. Hills
1	2	3	4	5
Agriculture	246,116 87·7% (of total)	182,449 93·0% (of total)	230,075 95·0% (of total)	155,534 94·0% (of total)
Production other than cultivation	29,232 8%	1,614 0·8%	2,770 1·1%	1,745 1·1%
Commerce	17,570 4·8%	2,179 1·1%	3,712 1·5%	1,410 0·9%
Transport	2,259 0·6%	381 0·2%	130 0·1%	3,227 1·9%
Other services	68,422 18·9%	9,575 4·9%	5,390 2·3%	3,524 2·1%

THE CHANGING PICTURE OF THE LIFE OF YOUNG TRIBAL GIRLS*

By J. A. Rose, *Assam*

In the very beginning I wish to make it quite clear that I am in no sense an expert painter who is able to portray accurately and in detail the vast panorama of the life of young tribal girls. While I have worked for more than 20 years with tribal students, the work has been chiefly with boys. Again it should be noted that students living in hostels do not always represent the "typical" student in a village. While it has been my privilege to work with students coming from the Khasi, Chiru, Nruanghmei Naga, Lushai and Hmar tribes, these represent an extremely small number of the total tribes living in Assam. However limited my personal experience has been, I have many tribal friends who have been kind enough to answer questions concerning their people. The knowledge thus gained through the years as well as answers to a questionnaire will be included in this paper.

A glance at a map showing the physical features of Assam will at once show that excluding North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) the major portion of the State is mountainous. Fifty-four per cent. of the total area is included in the Hills Districts. The chief valley is, of course, the Brahmaputra River valley averaging 50 miles in width and some 450 miles in length. Another very small plains-area is formed by the Brock River in the Cachar District. The physical features of the area have greatly influenced the life of the people. The up-mountain down-hillside nature of the terrain made communication and transport problems which are insolvable in many instances. The knife-edge mountain tops, and the unpredictable air currents made flying unsafe in most areas even in the most favourable weather.

The Changing Picture of the Life of Young Tribal Girls

There is no doubt that the rivers and the mountains have played a very large part in determining the location and the inter-mingling of the tribal peoples. Living in Manipur State is a small tribe of about 30,000. During the monsoon they are divided into three areas by swiftly flowing treacherous mountain streams. They are unable to communicate with each other during the rains. Hence those on the rim, and in contact

* A paper contributed as preparatory reading for the participants of the Rajpur Consultation (reported in this *Bulletin*). Miss J. A. Rose is in charge of the Tribal Christian Hostels, Asapalli.

with the valley, develop more rapidly and more steadily than those who are so cut-off for a lengthy season each year.

A word concerning the language problem in Assam may not be out of place. Assam Government recognises thirty major languages. Government Social Education leaders have found that at least 300 languages and dialects must be coped with if their job is to be carried on effectively. The Assamese language is spoken more widely than any other single language. There can be no doubt that it is not spoken by the majority of the people of the State. The Assamese being the largest single tribe living in the State naturally speak their mother tongue. But they are not the majority of the people. I would even question the statement that the Bengali and the Assamese peoples form the major portion of the population. This would be true only if those tribals living in their midst were counted as pure Assamese/Bengali. Countless thousands of tribals have been absorbed by the Assamese community, some to the point of having lost their tribal identity altogether. The Assamese language is not used by the tribals to communicate with each other. English has been, and still is, the "official" language of the tribal community as a whole.

Another barrier to more rapid development is the question of the script. Almost without exception, the tribals have adopted the Roman script. I have been told that originally the Garos used the Bengali script to write their language, but later switched to the Roman because of the ease of reading. The Assamese, Bengali, and Manipuri languages are written in practically the same script though it is spoken with different pronunciations. The same written character has a different tonal value in the various languages. I am told that in the NEFA area Government has adopted the policy of writing the tribal language in the Devanagri script. Personally I feel that the adoption of the Devanagri script for all languages in Assam would do much to unify the different peoples.

Tribal students from NEFA who attend school on the plains must do so in the Assamese language. When he returns to his village, he will not be able to read his own language because it is in another script ! There are two Missions working among the Boro people both doing excellent work; both doing literature and literacy work. One Mission insists on using the Assamese script for the Boro language, the other uses the Roman. Consequently hymn books, Bibles, and secular and Christian literature are used exclusively by their producers.

An ethnologic map of Assam, more properly North-East India' would be most instructive. Among the well-known names would appear the Khasi, Garo, Mizo (Lushai), Kuki and Naga. What is perhaps

not so well known is that there are some 20 different Naga tribes, each with his own language and culture. The Aos, Lothas, Semas and Angamis are perhaps the most widely known of the Naga tribes. Among the Kuki tribes, perhaps the most advanced and more widely known is the Thadou although in recent years the Anal, Paite, and Hmar tribes have made rapid advance.

In NEFA there are some 25 distinct tribes in different stages of civilization. Their widely divergent customs, religious ritual, dress and language make a very colourful picture, but pose great problems for those who work for their advancement along any line. Among the known tribes in this area are the Daflas, Tagins, Galongs, Sherkukpens, Apatanis, Akas, Padams, Khamptis, Singhos, Tangsas, Mishmis, Abors, Wanchos. These have been penetrated to varying depths with a view to bring to them modern methods of education and economy. The Phoms, Changs, Riangtrs and others have only been touched with modern ideas. The Konyak Nagas were a few years ago a wholly primitive people. But the Christian advance among them has been rapid, and they have developed modern ideas of work and education.

With this bit of background it is very clear that it is not possible to have a thorough knowledge of the picture, changing or still, of all the phases of all the various types of young girls covered by the word tribal. It is not possible for me to separate the life of the young girl from that of her home and village background. Hence it is possible that this paper deals more in general tones than in specific. One thing only is general and definite: the life of the young tribal girl *is changing*.

Nruanghmei Naga

After considering various ways to develop the theme, it seemed more reasonable to deal with a tribe as the unit. I begin with my own tribe with whom I have worked during the past 20 years. The above background should clearly indicate that life as a whole has greatly improved, educationally and economically. Community development has brought into this area radios, village libraries, pure-bred fowls, dispensaries, health clinics, improved schools. Perhaps the most influential development has been the jeepible road which not only brings in new things but new people with new ideas.

The Nruanghmei girl formerly was fortunate if she was able to read her hymn book. Rarely was she able to attend a school if she lived in a village where such was located. She was considered an economic asset to work in the jhum (field), to weave, cook, cut wood, carry water. She was not expected to think or do have a mind of her own. Hence it was considered a waste of time and money to send a girl to school. "They will only learn to write letters to the boys. Let them

remain home to learn housework. Why sacrifice them to school?" Even when they were offered free board, clothes and books, there was little interest.

Today that picture has changed much. Government is offering good salaries to nurses, midwives, gram sevakis and teachers. Hence the girl can now earn a good cash salary if she has some education. My experience is that the girl is still considered an economic asset. And I feel that few if any of the girls are interested in education/knowledge for itself: only as to the economic advance it will bring.

Socially there have been great stirrings. Previously social activities were confined chiefly to the tribal festivities in which the young girls had their part. Or if they were from Christian homes, the Endeavour gave them opportunities for social contacts and expression. Marriages were arranged by parents, and the girls accepted what could not well be avoided. Today more and more this custom is losing its hold. But great pressure is still brought upon the girl to marry "according to custom".

A custom practised by practically all the tribals in this area is that which separates the children, especially the girls, from their mothers upon the death of the father. The girls especially are taken by their father's nearest male relative. He arranges her marriage and is otherwise legally responsible. She may not live with him, but with one or several relatives as their economic need brings her to work for them. Even among second and third generation Christians this is still the custom. It is rarely a happy arrangement, and gives a feeling of insecurity to the growing girl.

As the tribe has had more contact with "foreign" ideas and personnel than others, there has been a noticeable lowering of both moral and ethical standards. All tribal girls have always enjoyed much more social freedom than their plains-dwelling sisters. In the new context of life, this has often led to misunderstanding. This has been especially true when those from outside have come into the community without having had an understanding of the tribal cultural patterns. Even in the Christian community, the moral standards have been greatly lowered. Often the Church seems not to have a clear-cut policy of teaching and/or discipline. With many new freedoms, and new spheres of interest, the young girl often finds herself confused. There is a great need for a sympathetic approach to the new problems of social behaviour with which youth is faced.

Spiritual life among the Nruanghmeis has in general lost its fervour. There is no doubt much more religious activity, but the spiritual depth is often low. Girls are being admitted into the local Bible School.

They are taking part in Church and youth activities. But there is more activity than warmth if it may so be expressed.

In General

I think that with the exception of those areas where Christianity has only recently been accepted, the spiritual tone of the picture is not as bright as we would like. In former years, most if not all of the schools in tribal areas were conducted either by Church or Mission bodies. There was not only character teaching, but Scripture lessons formed part of most school curriculums. Great strength in Sunday School and youth organisations was placed on the memorisation of Scriptures. For the most part, the parents were first or second generation Christians who have in many instances suffered for their faith in Christ. The tales of the persecution of believers were real. The Christian life was a vital experience in practical living. You were either an out-and-out Christian, or you were not.

Today in most tribal areas outside of NEFA, there is a large community who have never had a personal experience with Christ. They follow neither the ancient paths, nor the Way. They are in a real sense a lost generation. In many instances, the Christian leaders seem to assume that being born in a Christian home constitutes Christian faith and life. Assuming that the children will automatically follow Christ on reaching the age of decision, the Church has been rudely shocked to find its youth confused, wandering in a maze of new experiences and new ideas, without any clear idea of its destiny. The comparatively rapid advance in education and economic betterment has brought together new, intriguing ideas, new social forces, new social attitudes which the village girl especially has not been able to absorb at once. The result has been a loss of balance of the more worthwhile forces.

Generally speaking there is considerable improvement in the *economic life* of all. Government is doing much to encourage students to attend schools. Encouragement takes the form of free tuition, scholarships, and in some instances free school books. This Government aid to tribal students extends from the beginning of secondary education through college and on into special grants for specialised training. This specialised aid enables countless girls to attend school who formerly would have been working in the jhums.

Intellectually the general tone of the tribal girl is high. It is said that among the Ao Nagas, education is like smoking to the habituated smoker. Radio, newspapers, picture books spread before the young girl undreamed worlds of new people, social culture, patterns of economic life, books and ideas to be assimilated and to be lived.

Conclusion

In conclusion it may be proper to suggest some ways wherein the young girl is in need of special guidance in this varied and confusing picture.

1. *Proper Dress.*—Heretofore the young girl has worn only hand-woven simple garments like every other girl of her village. Now she has learned to wear new styles, expensive materials, rich ornaments—often beyond the means of her family. Style of blouses customarily worn in other parts of India are almost always immodest for the tribal girl in her more primitive setting, and with her different culture.

2. *Work.*—One invariable reaction produced by education is the repulsion for physical work formerly accepted as part of daily living. Cutting wood, working in the jhum, pounding rice, weaving, were all part of daily living a few years ago. Now the school-going lass feels that she is above such tasks: someone else must do the drudgery. She is often encouraged in this attitude by one or both parents who feel that their daughter is educated; and of course educated people do not work with their hands ! The dignity of labour is a point needed to be learned by our young tribal friends.

3. *Thrift.*—With more and more cash crops being grown, and other means of increasing the cash assets of the family, there is a great tendency to regard money lightly. Money as such is often a new and charming " toy " to be enjoyed but not greatly valued. Government aid in various forms also has a tendency to encourage the young to treat money very lightly. The young girl needs to be taught the value of money, its uses, the financial position in her home, her part in maintaining it, the need for saving, and thrifty living.

4. *Nutrition.*—Assam is famous for the lack of vitamins in its food. Added to this is the almost total lack of knowledge regarding the values of foods, the need for a balanced diet and the part proper diet plays in good health; these and similar lessons need to be taught the young girl early in life.

5. *Mothercraft.*—Infant mortality among the tribals is still very, very high. In former days if the mother died at birth or early infancy, the child invariably died also. There was no knowledge of artificial feeding, chiefly perhaps, because of the fact that the tribals do not raise cattle. Both knowledge of feeding, and milk are still very scarce. All that may be summed up in the words mothercraft and homecraft need to be taught the tribal girl.

6. *Marriage counselling.*—Broken homes and divorce are on the increase among the tribals. Marriages for the most part are made

according to the old customs, but married life is lived in the confusion of new and trying patterns. The pastor or Church leader is often unable to give advice or guidance either before marriage or when the first hint of trouble in the home arises. With youth more often making their own selection of life-partners, it becomes the duty of the Christian leader to give guidance in these vital matters at a very early age.

7. *Practical Christian Living.*—Each year I am more convinced that the older generation of Christian leaders have failed the present young adult in the practice of Christian living. I find so often that youth is able to tell you what the Bible says on a certain subject, but he has not applied the truth to his own daily living. Many have seemed shocked when brought face to face with the practical aspects of right living in daily practice. I feel greatly concerned because there seems to be an attitude that the body of a Christian may be used for all and any thing so long as he " believes in Jesus ". Self-control, self-discipline, mental cleanliness seem strange concepts to many youth I have met. What should a Christian do in the new and changing era in which he lives? What should a Christian do when his community is torn between two loyalties? What is the Christian's political responsibility? What concern is citizenship to the Christian?

In this strange and enchanting age in which the young tribal girl finds herself growing into maturity, it behoves the Church of Christ to stand ready with all the resources of Heaven to claim her for the Lord, who bought her body, soul and spirit. The life of the young tribal girl is changing. Let us labour so that the final picture shall be to the praise of His glory who washed and loosed us from our sins that we might become children of God.

Consultation Findings

A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA TODAY

(A Study Document)

Under the auspices of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, the Department of Sociology of Hislop College, Nagpur, and the Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Rajpur-Dehra Dun, a Consultation was held at the Rajpur Centre on "A Christian Approach to Tribal Communities in India Today." The Rt. Rev. Dilbar Hans of Chotanagpur and the Rev. B. M. Pugh of Shillong co-chaired the Consultation and about 25 Christian leaders, members of tribal communities or serving them drawn mainly from the Churches in the tribal areas of Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Nagaland participated in it. Some students of sociology and anthropology were also present. Shri L. M. Shrikantji, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, spent a day with the Consultation, presenting the approach of the Government of India to tribal development and otherwise participating in the discussions (see *full list of participants in the Appendix*).

The aim of the Consultation was given as follows:—

"*The aim of the Consultation is to start a process of thinking with a view* (1) *to understand the changes that are coming into being in the structures and values of tribal community life in India today,* (2) *to evaluate the policies and programmes of the Indian State and the Indian Church in relation to these changes in the light of the Christian understanding of community,* (3) *to help develop a proper approach to the political, economic and cultural requirements of tribal life in present-day India.*"

After the first period of a general discussion of papers, two groups prepared reports, each on one of the two topics:*

* Some of them are published elsewhere in this Bulletin.

"Life and Mission of the Church in Tribal Society in India Today" and "Tribal Community Development in the Context of Nation-Building." These were revised and finalised by the whole Consultation. The reports representing a consensus of the Consultation are here presented as a Study Document. Conveners: *T. S. Wilkinson, James P. Alter and M. M. Thomas.*

I. Life and Mission of the Church in Tribal Society Today

The Church in the many tribal communities of the country lives its life in a context of change. Tribal societies have ceased to be relatively static and unchanging, and the Church is learning to live its life and carry out its mission in a new and dynamic world. Certain of the changes are common to the whole country while some aspects of life are especially perplexing to tribal society.

I. CULTURAL CHANGES

A. The Family

Education and the coming of the industrial and technical revolution exert heavy strains on the traditional clan and family systems of authority and decision. Inevitably young men and women who have received education become more independent and individualistic, and find as a result the tendency of the elder members of the tribe to resist change and to reserve authority to themselves, irksome and even intolerable. The place of authority in "the big uncle" or head of the clan, the respect for the elder, the acceptance of age-old norms and customs, are no longer accepted, and very frequently there is nothing and no one to take their place. In addition to this, interpersonal relations are also in a state of flux.

When large numbers of our tribal people move away from their homes and lands in order to work in the large new industries, then this break-up of traditional loyalties and ties is most complete. For generations tribals have been held to their land, and to be separated from their ancestral homes is to be separated from deep roots of stability and security. In certain areas it is not uncommon for educated tribal people to turn their backs on their old culture; they wish to leave behind them all that

symbolises narrowness of outlook and what is considered by them to be primitive and uncultured. In other areas, where modern education has been in existence longer, this state of general revolt has passed, and we experience, even from the educated, a keenness to revive certain elements of tribal culture. In this we do not simply return to the traditional, but recapture its life in modified ways.

B. Language

In many cases tribal languages were first reduced to writing under the influence of Christian Missions. Frequently the script used was Roman, and inevitably local dialects were revivified.

At present the situation as regards language is one of confusion. There is undoubtedly a revival of interest in local dialects which is a counterpart of the greater self-consciousness in most tribal communities; in other areas language has become a part of the struggle for power and prestige while everywhere our need to communicate with one another in the nation emphasises our lack of any one language known to us all. The one thing certain is that we need to show great sensitiveness to each group as regards language.

For Christians the problem of language is especially acute, for too often our unity in Christ is put in jeopardy by our inability to share with one another, due to our inability to communicate. It must therefore be a matter for special concern and experiment among Christians to discover ways of overcoming these difficulties.

C. Moral Ideals

Owing to the changes mentioned above, ideas of morality are changing, old sanctions for behaviour are weakening and, frequently, tribal people find themselves with no clearly and universally acknowledged norms of life.

As long as we lived in our traditional unsophisticated cultures honesty, straightforwardness and self-control of a simple character were taken for granted both as ideals and achievements. These ethical ideals were seldom strained, for our social relations were immediate and arose from a certain innocence.

But now modern civilization, based as it is on modern technology, has uprooted us from this old culture; the world we knew has gone. With the widening of contacts and our entry into the vaster world of state and complex society our decisions have inevitably become more involved and complicated. A gulf has opened up between our traditional standards and our present practices and often we suffer from a sense of guilt. There is also the uncertainty as to what reality and relevance our traditional standards do have in a world in which we must need learn to take personal responsibility for our decisions in situations which daily become more complicated.

In essence this is a challenge for us Christians to accept the inner core of the Gospel which is grace and forgiveness and not a legal system of moral absolutes. It is in the continuing experience of life with Christ in the concrete situation that the Christian individual and fellowship can take firm decisions and act, free from guilt and desire for self-justification. It is in this way that the Church may provide moral fibre for the character of our people and moral foundations for our new societies.

D. Political Change

As yet some tribal communities have not become fully aware of the independence of India. Even those who know that India is free from British rule, often continue to feel themselves to be subject peoples. The sense of Indian nationhood is only beginning to take root in many of our communities, as is true elsewhere in India also. There is, in our opinion, need for increased public education and discussion as to what the Independence of India means and involves for tribal people, a responsibility which needs to be shared by the Church.

As a result of Independence, there has come political equality resultant upon the right of each man and woman to their vote; the panchayat raj is now coming into being, and each of these involves a break with the past, with the ancient forms of decision-taking in the tribe and in the springs of authority.

These changes have awakened in us a desire for further autonomy and independence and a spirit of assertiveness. The leaders of the nation and of the Church should not imagine that these imply a lack of loyalty or disaffection towards the country as a

whole; rather they are for tribal people the necessary step towards awareness of their own fuller personality as human beings, and as a part of the new nation.

E. Religious Change

(*a*) *In the Christian Church.*—In recent years there has been the change from Mission responsibility and leadership to Church responsibility and leadership; increasingly Christian tribals themselves are assuming full responsibility which includes financial self-support. Welfare services undertaken by the Church have received a new impetus and Christians have become alive to the problems arising out of the new industrial development of the country and to the difficulties resultant upon our too often separate existence in denominations.

There are also new forces working against the Church: these include militant Hindu religious groups such as the Arya Samaj and the widely accepted, though mistaken, idea (in such parts as Orissa) that tribal "self-hood" can only be brought about if tribal people remain in or return to their original religious and cultural condition. There have been cases of tribals lapsing from their Christian Faith for these reasons.

(*b*) *In Non-Christian Tribal Religion.*—Non-Christian tribal people often consider Christianity to be a dangerous force which threatens to disintegrate the solidarity of the tribe. Popular Hinduism, combined with extreme nationalism, works on this assumption and is strengthened by those working seriously to reform the old religious attitudes and practices, especially the Tana Bhagats and Kabir Panthis.

II. THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In such a world of cultural, social, political and religious changes God has set His Church to live its life in relation to Him and to give its life for service and mission to the world.

The Life of the Church

These radical changes listed above present to the Church grave questions of pastoral care. In the new industrial townships there are two types of tribal peoples: those who are uprooted by their own decision (they have left home for work), and those who,

through no decision of their own, have been displaced by State action (their homes and lands have been in a place selected for the erection of a dam or factory). In new industrial centres, where often there is no place of worship and where there is no common language, how are these two groups of tribal people to be bound together in a worshipping community and fellowship?

In situations of such complexity it may be possible for more than one denomination to join in building a Church which they may all use for worship even though at the present time we cannot always have joint services of worship. The experience of the Church in the new steel town of Bhilai, M.P., in which Christians of various denominations are working closely together, encourages us to think that this may well be a way forward in other parts of the country, where industrial developments are taking place. Clearly the responsibility of Church leaders is to be on alert for groups of tribal people who have moved into new areas for work; in this the pastors of the congregations from which the workers come should help by sending information to the Church ministers in the towns as is already being done in some areas. If such links are provided then newly arrived urban workers may be brought into the life of the town congregtions.

How are younger people, for whom the Church represents the older, traditional authority and pattern, to discover in the local congregation spiritual and mental forces which will hold their enthusiasm and loyalty? This question expresses a grave problem which arises in tribal areas as well as in the great new industrial towns.

In some areas western forms of worship have become so integrated into Christian tribal life that these forms can no longer be considered foreign, while in others there is need to express our worship of God in indigenous forms and ways. At certain moments in the life of the Church there is the need to give up tribalism; there has to be a break with the past. At other times it is equally important to strengthen links with the past and to discover with due discrimination ways in which tribal culture such as music and dancing may be baptized into Christ. Far too often we have treated the fine arts as peripheral, as luxuries for which we seldom have time. Our life today as individuals and as societies, depends upon deep and living links with our

past; our artists, be they painters, sculptors, musicians, dancers, provide us with these organic though inatangible emotional roots. The Mundas have such a gift in the painter, Marcus Topno, but we need many more among us Christians whose gifts are in the arts; the health of our society depends more than we can easily appreciate upon such men and women.

There is for us Christian tribals a temptation to emphasise exclusively our tribal loyalties and to forget the universality of the Church. A Christian Church or congregation may never be reduced to an ethnic cult without forfeiting the right to call itself Christian. We suggest that in Churches composed of only one ethnic group, Christian people of another ethnic group be invited to live and work among them; in this way the essential universality of the Church needs to be expressed. A Christian Church even in its local manifestation is always catholic and ecumenical.

There is wide agreement among us that the solidarity of our life as tribals has suffered because of the denominationalism introduced to us by western Christians. We were one in our old tribes while as Christians we are Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, Anglicans and the rest. Indeed we have to admit that many of us have become more denominationally minded than our western friends themselves. We must press on to discover our unity in Christ; this is most urgent.

The Mission of the Church

The kernel of the message we have to give to the world is Jesus Christ Himself and the good news that through Him God has reconciled all people and all things to Himself. To every man, woman and child who has begun to discover the joy and freedom of this fact is given the privilege of sharing the news with others.

It is true that in the past the mission of the Church has been closely related to the liberating influence of education, to freedom from social injustices and from economic disabilities. For us particularly the Gospel is the power which liberates us from the control and fear of evil spirits which dominated our old tribal life. Whatever material and economic services may accompany the Christian mission the core and centre of the Good News is

not these services but Jesus Christ Himself and the life which we share with Him when He becomes the centre of our human existence.

We thank God that very many Christian tribal people spontaneously share the Gospel with their neighbours; teams of Naga Christians go to other tribes, the Khasi Church has sent a missionary to Manipur State, and the Diocese of Chota Nagpur is contemplating work among the Konds in Orissa. The South Cachar Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Assam, composed largely of the Hmar tribe, are undertaking evangelistic work among the Desmasha clan of the Cachari tribe in Cachar District. In West Ganjam, Christians from two denominations have joined together to share the Gospel with the Konds and Saoras. These are a few of the many examples of inter-tribal evangelism and of the joyful determination to go beyond the boundaries of our own geographic areas with news of Jesus Christ.

At the same time we can see certain stumbling blocks to our wider usefulness as God's instruments:—

(*a*) While it is true that the first Christian missionaries in their approach to tribal peoples made use of the corporate structures of our social life which resulted in what are called Mass Movements, yet fundamentally, the form of Christian life and thought brought to us from the west was very individualistic. It spoke to us as individual people and had too little corporate reality. We saw and appreciated its redeeming power for the individual but we failed to understand that the redeeming of corporate structures and of social and cultural life is an essential part of the message of the Gospel. Jesus Christ is even yet only just becoming, in our minds and spirits, relevant to our social and cultural life as a whole.

(*b*) In our enthusiasm for the Christian Gospel and for its gift of liberation and forgiveness it was perhaps natural that we should do less than justice to our old tribal religion and society. There remains now a great need for us to study more deeply our ancient religious life in order to find points both of contact with and departure from the Christian revelation.

(*c*) Some of us have to acknowledge that our enthusiasm for evangelism is sometimes tempered by the fear that our tribal

society will be weakened when others from outside, may be of another social status, accept Christ by faith and by baptism. Verbally we accept Christ's gift as being for the world while in actuality, we fear the results of the widening of our local congregations to include others outside our own tribal societies. Some Churches on the other hand have not yet been faced with this problem.

(*d*) Some of us question whether the forms of Church life, its administration and organisation, which we have so far accepted somewhat uncritically from the west, are according to the genius of our people. There is, in our opinion, need to examine from the sociological standpoint western forms of Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational Church government in order to see whether they may be connected by deep roots to our own tribal societies. There is need for deeper thought and critical evaluation of these western forms of Church organization and an openness to the possibility that it is God's will for a new form of Church life and order to be evolved in closer relation to our own roots and natural ways of life and authority.

III. SOME SPECIAL PROBLEMS

(*a*) *The Dormitory System.*—The life and place of the ghotul, dhumkuria and morung need to be more fully investigated from a Christian standpoint in order to discover whether such organizations might be adapted by us for recreational and educational purposes.

In Nagaland this has already been done and morungs, operated under the auspices of the Church, exist for the training of young people; there is strict discipline and their life includes prayer and scripture teaching. In many instances where the majority of a village is Christian it is open to non-Christian youth also.

(*b*) *Drinking.*—Christian opinion in tribal communities is firm in its desire to prohibit drinking. Where drinking of rice beer has its part in tribal worship, some exception may be made. In some areas it is maintained that drinking of rice beer is good for health; we consider this to be a fallacious opinion. According to the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution we hope the Government will enforce effective prohibition.

In order to avoid a purely negative attitude to drink and the social recreation around it, we are in favour of introducing alternative drinks and recreation facilities (may be of rice beer itself with its harmful ingredients extracted).

(*c*) *Dancing*.—There is in most of the educated people of our tribal communities a revival of dancing. Such dancing needs to be disassociated from traditional worship; this means that it should be secularized for common use by Christians and non-Christians together and secondly, dancing should be incorporated into the life of the Christian Church to express Christian themes. There is great need for careful and discriminating experiment in this field.

(*d*) *A Christian Pattern of Living*.—In many areas Christians have been given some help and direction in their family life but little has been done for them to bring to bear Christian criteria on the social life of the individual or community as a whole. The Christian way should not be identified with western norms of behaviour. In the light of the Biblical understanding of life we Christians need to work out in concrete situations what is involved in living by the light of Christ in modern life.

(*e*) *Aid and Education for Self-reliance*.—What does freedom from paternalism mean? In the past paternalism existed in the services rendered in tribal areas by voluntary agencies such as the Christian Missions, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Adamjati Seva Sangh. Today it is the Welfare State that provides the resources, financial and human, for services to our people; we are grateful for this for when a State does service there is a greater possibility that such service may be shot through with justice rather than with charity. Nevertheless there is a danger that the citizens of a Welfare State may come to consider the State itself as the "man-bap" and may become more and more dependent on Government and Government agencies for everything; this temptation is doubly great for people like ourselves who are the recipients of special treatment from the State itself.

The goal of community development in tribal areas has been clearly stated to be the development of initiative and an attitude of self-help but it remains a question as to whether the process of welfare aid and services has in it sufficient psychological, economic, political and administrative checks against this new

kind of State paternalism which may, we think, be even more destructive of self-reliance than was the paternalism of voluntary agencies. In this connection the Church has to consider what educational and spiritual help it should render our peoples so that the new interdependence within nation and State may become conducive to the spirit of true self-hood.

IV. RELEVANT FORMS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

The Church in our opinion needs to concentrate on the following forms of service in the present context:

Encouragement and help in developing tribal languages where this is a felt need.

A stronger emphasis on Adult Education: (1) in securing the services of promoters and organisers such as already exist in Utkal, Bihar and Santalia Christian Councils, (2) in providing charts and primers, (3) in providing literature for neo-literates, (4) in making wise use of all available resources and personnel. Until now in Assam this appears to have been somewhat neglected.

Basic Teacher-Training

Basic Education.—(1) It is recommended that the experience of the Pakur High School, Bihar (where hostel life is patterned along the lines of the life in the village), be followed in so far as practical in various areas. (2) The proposal in Bihar to form a Union Christian Basic Teachers' Training School is greatly to be encouraged. (3) There is a need for Christian Basic Training institutions related to rural crafts and also for the training of young men and women in industrial skills relevant to the increasing industrialization of tribal areas. It is reported that the Luthern Church in Chota Nagpur is starting a school for training youth in industrial skills.

Hostels.—These may vary in type, ranging from the provision of buildings in which students live bringing their staple foodstuffs from their village homes to a type in which (as in the Tribal Christian Hostels of Asapalli, Assam) there is supervised work and study, recreation and worship, with free or subsidised boarding. In such supervised hostels not only may village life in many of its aspects be continued but new arts and crafts may be acquired as a part of the "self-help" stipend provided by the Church. In such a setting in which Christian living, Bible study and wor-

ship are experienced over a period of years, new attitudes related to Christian citizenship, tolerance and understanding may well become a permanent part of the students' character.

Vocational Guidance for Youth

Counselling on Family Life.—Although very much may be done through women's meetings, the Mother's Union and Women's Institutes, yet there remains largely neglected, Christian teaching in the actual homes of Christian people.

Education for Citizenship.—There is an urgent and immediate need for us in our respective tribal communities to undertake teaching and training in Christian citizenship. Failing to appreciate fully that Christ is the Lord of all life the Church in the past has frowned upon or even boycotted political life and activity as something sub-Christian or, in all events, outside the Christian sphere of concern.

The historical reasons for this gap in our understanding no longer exist, and the question confronts us that if we Christians are to witness to our Faith in politics and in our actions as Indian citizens there is need for us to think more deeply about these responsibilities and privileges. The Church has a duty to prepare her people for membership in the panchayat raj and more widely for membership not only in the tribe but in the nation as a whole, indeed in the world community. For this educational process to take place, organs of education are needed in each tribal area while these in turn may be encouraged and helped by the All-India Organizations such as the C.I.S.R.S., the S.C.M. and the other Youth Movements of the Church.

It is our diagnosis that we Christian tribals face at present three dangers: either we may choose Christian communalism or tribal communalism or communism. These dangers can be overcome only by clear thinking and understanding of our Christian responsibility in social, civil and national life. In this is included an understanding of the Christian bases of political activity and of the Secular State.

II. Tribal Community Development in the Context of Nation-Building

The tribal population of India now numbering a little over two crores has drawn the attention of the government and the

non-tribals in general for some time past. Prior to Independence various plans to protect them from exploitation were suggested and safeguards provided. But attempts for their social and economic development were of a sporadic nature and in no way properly co-ordinated. Various Christian and other missions and voluntary organizations started their work in tribal regions and through hospitals and schools rendered very useful service both spiritual and material.

After Independence, however, it became quite evident to the people of India that all our national development programmes would remain incomplete if adequate provisions were not made for the development of the various backward people including the tribals who were far behind the rest of the nation. This feeling was given expression to by incorporating in the Constitution of India special provisions for the development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and other backward people. Article 46 of the Constitution of India lays down that "the State shall promote with special care educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation". It is also felt that a policy of isolation was neither possible nor desirable. Assimilation, as advocated by some, would have meant imposition. Therefore, the only approach, that would make available to the tribals the benefits of modern advanced society and yet retain their separate identity was integration. This policy of integration aims at developing a creative adjustment between the tribals and the non-tribals of India, leading to responsible partnership.

Towards this end the Ministry of Home Affairs provided a sum of Rs. 6,45,00,000 under the Second Five-Year Plan for introducing 43 special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks in the most backward tribal areas of the country at Rs. 15 lakhs each, in addition to the Rs. 12 lakhs each provided in the budget of the Community Development Ministry. These Blocks cover 23,54,058 square miles and their population is 16,85,325 of which 12,10,976 is tribal. Their distribution in the various States or Union Territories is as follows:—

Andhra Pradesh	4	Assam	7	Bihar	8
Bombay (Old)	7	Madhya Pradesh	10	Orissa	4
Rajasthan	1	Manipur	1	Tripura	1

I. FORCES OF CHANGE

Before we proceed to critically evaluate the various aspects of the development plan it is pertinent to indicate some of the major forces that had an impact on our life and culture.

1. *Political*

(*a*) Due to partition of the country into India and Pakistan the tribal people of Assam specially those living in areas bordering East Pakistan were much affected. Some tribal people of Tripura, Cachar, Mizo (Lushai) Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills lost their land and market. It became impossible for many to send their fruits and other marketable goods to Calcutta and its vicinity through Pakistan. They were thus left without any proper means of livelihood.

(*b*) *Merger of the Native States.*—Many of us in Orissa, M.P., etc., were under native rulers before Independence. The merger of the Native States into the Indian Union, however, was followed by new forest tenancy and excise laws which although granted greater security and social well-being became cumbersome because of the restraints they imposed. But these curtailment of rights were more than counterbalanced by the development projects started by the government which also brought new hope and in some respects contentment.

(*c*) *Political Awakening and the Reorganization of the States.*—With Independence also came an awareness of political self-hood which gave rise to demand for separate States in parts of the country where there was a greater concentration of our tribal people. The agitation of the Naga people took a violent shape and finally in 1961 the Government conceded to their demand for a separate autonomous state. This has satisfied most of the Naga people but there are still some who are operating as underground hostiles as in the past. However, it was stated that many of these unreconciled elements of the Naga people are also afraid to return to their villages. In a society where revenge is commended this fear of the hostiles who have killed members of various families becomes understandable.

There is a strong demand among many tribal people of Chota Nagpur for a Jharkhand State and some Gonds of Central

India are pressing their claim for a Gondwana State. The Hill tribes of Assam are also pressing for a separate Hill State. All these movements express the desire for political autonomy. The reasons underlying such movements can be stated to be the feeling among particular tribal groups that they would be in a better position to develop both socially and economically if autonomy is granted to them. Another reason is the feeling among some tribals that the other advanced communities consider them as second class citizens. Such demands however have to be viewed in the larger perspective of the regions concerned and the nation as a whole.

2. *Communication*

Construction of new roads and railways have brought many of our people in contact with the outside world. Other people are coming to the tribal areas and the tribals themselves are going out into the cities and non-tribal areas and so often they do not want to return to their home villages. Those who have settled in the urban areas tend to look down upon their backward tribal folks, in the villages. The Halbas and Dhakars of Bastar for example move to the cities and there they call themselves Thakurs and also wear the sacred thread. Contact with city people has also created linguistic problems. However, in certain regions such as Bastar and Chota Nagpur a *lingua franca* has developed for communication with other tribals and non-tribals of the regions. Some of the Assam tribals for fear of the imposition of the Assamese language have indicated that English be retained the official language, till such time that they have learnt Hindi. New ideas are entering into tribal minds through intensive contact and communication with the outside world.

3. *Industries and Mines*

The new industrial centres in tribal areas, such as Bhilai and Rourkela, are bringing about a rapid change in the life of our people. Hundreds are moving into these towns to seek employment and are sending financial help to their families back home. As few of them can afford to bring their wives and children, some of them begin to visit prostitutes and often contract venereal diseases which they take back to their village.

Mining operations have also been started on lands which were originally used by our people for agriculture because of the rich mineral deposits. This is happening on a large scale in Chota Nagpur and is displacing many of our tribal people from their traditional habitat. On the other hand it also provides unskilled jobs in the mines to husband, wife and children.

4. *Missions*

Religious missions and other voluntary agencies have been vital forces of change. The Christian Mission, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Adamjati Seva Mandal are the main missions in Assam, Chota Nagpur and other tribal areas. Due to Christianity the family pattern in many places has altered considerably. For example, among the "Khasis" the role of the youngest daughter is changing and with it the concept of property. In Chota Nagpur area marriage has become costly among some Christians. Christianity has engendered the sense of individuality and self-consciousness, and it is instrumental in establishing monogamous families. Schools started by such missions have done a great deal towards producing local leadership and the hospitals have provided much-needed medical assistance.

II. PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In recent years the Community Development Programme has become a major force that is rapidly changing the tribal community. This programme aims at bringing about such co-ordinated development that will ultimately integrate these isolated groups with the rest of the country. In certain respects the tribal blocks differ from the ones found in non-tribal areas—specially in regard to area of land and population covered. The avenues of development are being pursued within the broad framework of five fundamental principles enumerated by our Prime Minister and now known as "Tribal Panchshila". They are:

(1) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional culture.

(2) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.

(3) We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed, specially in the beginning, but we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.

(4) We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.

(5) We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

Let us examine the implications of these principles and comment on them:—

1. There should not be any imposition on the tribal people. They should be allowed to grow and develop according to their own genius. There is no imposition if the development programme is based on the "felt needs" of the people. This entails a great deal of understanding, imagination and patience which sometimes are not exercised and thus certain items of the programme tend to become impositions, even though they may have been introduced with the best of intentions.

2. Respect of tribal rights in forest and land is essential because about 80% of our people practise some form of agriculture. However, this question should be considered with reference to the agricultural practices, such as shifting cultivation and also ownership of land in unsurveyed areas. Many of our people are finding it difficult to continue shifting agriculture and thus feel that their right to land is not being respected. This is also true in regard to hunting in reserved forests. In some parts the most dreaded person is the forest guard. Proper survey to establish permanent ownership of land should be expedited.

3. Training local leadership is a commendable principle. In some areas tribals are being trained to take up development programmes and the Church has made a valuable contribution in this direction especially in Nagaland and some parts of Chota Nagpur. A few cases were pointed out where the experience of

local personnel was not utilised specially in the Chota Nagpur region. Attempts should be made to keep these trained persons among their own people so that maximum benefit may be derived.

4. The tribal people, no doubt, will be overwhelmed by the simultaneous introduction of too many programmes. The general policy in this connection should take into consideration the understanding and acceptability of the people.

5. "The quality of human character that is evolved" is a correct principle for judging the results of development programmes in tribal society. But it raises the question whether what the State, as the organ of the Nation, conceives as good human character is itself right. At present the Constitution of India indicates the national criteria of the good society. In its Preamble, Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy, the nation conceives the goal of society as a fraternity of free and equal persons related to one another and committed to promote the welfare of all, through institutions which recognise a Justice beyond all men and all institutions. We accept this present national standard of judging good character, because it reflects the Christian understanding of man and society. However, from time to time, as Governments change leading to changes in the spirit or/and letter of the Constitution, the national criteria have to be re-examined.

III. IMPACT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Community Development Programme takes into consideration all spheres of tribal life except the religious. Their economic and social life is bound to be deeply influenced by these programmes. But certain changes in the old economic and social system raise new problems. The sudden transition from shifting cultivation to plough cultivation is generally resented and even rejected. Therefore, shifting cultivation should be checked gradually and after providing substitute methods by which the people can earn their livelihood. It was suggested that if the vacated plots could be converted into orchards the tribals after four or five years would have such a substitute means of livelihood. Another method is terrace farming which is being experimented by the Government in certain areas. For the tribal people compost manure is considered the best available. Bunds for minor

irrigation are sometimes constructed without giving proper thought to the result likely to ensue. Many such dams are simply useless resulting in waste of money.

Money for development programme is sometimes used indiscriminately. There are several reasons for this which require definition and remedy. But it will facilitate discriminate spending if the Government will make some provision for the use of money left unused in one year in the next year.

Money economy has given rise to many difficult problems among our people. It is mobile wealth and thus has a great possibility of use for individual purposes. Some of the tribals are not able to make proper use of money. They get money for development purposes but spend it on personal and family needs. Money is spent in liquor, and to meet other social obligations, a practice which is widespread. It is true that this is misuse of national funds. The absence of any agency that can provide them funds for meeting social obligations, compels many to adopt this dishonest method. Besides training in productive use of money, it would help if at least for some time some funds are made available for social purposes at low rates of interest.

Some tribals also have no idea of the market price of their articles. They are cheated by the wholesale dealers and other businessmen. Through co-operative societies these people may learn the intricacies of marketing and get information on the current market prices.

Housing projects for the tribals have not been successful in some areas. The reason is that every item of a culture is connected with the whole complex of that culture. A radical change in the structure of their houses require a similar change in their way of living. Therefore housing projects for tribals should be undertaken along with proper education of the people and with due regard to the local customs and practices. They need to be implemented on the basis of the felt-needs.

Employment problem in tribal areas exists in different forms. More tribals should be employed wherever possible. There are still some instances of forced labour. Tribals are underpaid by the contractors. The village panchayats should see that the tribal labourer is paid at least the government rate of wages.

Some form of organization is necessary in the tribal villages to check labour exploitation. Tribal labour should be organized along trade union lines as this would help the implementation of the relevant provisions of labour laws.

Some of our people have at times been displaced as a result of national development schemes. Mining operations, industrialization, irrigation, power projects and political divisions are uprooting some of the tribals from their original habitat. Adequate planning for the rehabilitation of these displaced tribals is very essential. Compensation both in land and money in some areas has not measured up to the loss these people had to suffer.

In this connection it was mentioned that generally planning for rehabilitation begins only after a people have been uprooted whereas proper rehabilitation programme should precede the actual execution of the plan entailing displacement. Land of the same grade should as far as possible be provided for the displaced persons. Mining operations can be carried on by the tribals on a co-operative basis and the Government may give them the necessary technical assistance. After a people have been displaced as a result of mining and establishment of factories, they should get the first preference for employment in the same, a principle that is being followed in some places. There should be a scheme of long-term training of displaced persons so that they may be able to find their vocation and thus make their contribution to the national development programme.

To promote the cultural programmes among women, youth and children, traditional forms of institutions and activities should be encouraged. Trained women can teach cooking, weaving, various crafts and child rearing to tribal women in work groups. Schools can be made the centre of children's cultural programmes. Wherever an indigenous dormitory system exists such as ghotul or dhumkuria, this should be used as a means to train youth of the tribal village. In Mandla, M.P., youth programme is well organized. Football, drills, tour of other cities and countries are some of the programmes of youth cultural activities.

Schools in tribal communities should be co-ordinated with the traditional systems of education. These institutions should develop a basic training bias. Emphasis needs to be given to vocational training of our youth. There should be a proper

arrangement for the supply of material required for crafts to follow up the vocational training in villages. School teachers wherever possible should come from the same tribe so that proper schooling may be given in the mother-tongue or dialect of the tribal children.

In order to improve the health of the tribals, questions regarding hygiene, sanitation and medical aid have to be considered. The sanitary condition round about the dwelling places is often unsatisfactory. Proper arrangement for poultry, pigs, cattle and disposal of garbage needs immediate attention. Unprotected drinking water is another source of disease and in many places proper wells have not been provided. Adequate ventilation in the houses are necessary but bearing in view the scanty bedding of the people. Lastly, for T.B., leprosy and V.D. cases, adequate arrangements for segregation and treatment are required.

The panchayat system is not successful in some tribal areas of Assam and Chota Nagpur. Elections involve too much party politics even at the village panchayat level. Sometimes these panchayats conceal rather than deal with civil and criminal offences. Because of political groupings, factions and quarrels are rampant in the panchayats. The basic mistake in these areas has been the neglect of the traditional panchayat system of the tribals which followed certain democratic procedure even though without elections and casting of votes. In order to set things right it is advisable to modify panchayats taking into consideration the traditional panchayat system also. The two national elections have made the tribals conscious of their rights and privileges as citizens.

Many national leaders, social workers and some social scientists also praise the tribals for some of their good qualities like honesty, truthfulness, self-reliance, discipline and so on. These qualities are called the tribal characteristics. We are not able to state whether these are the exclusive characteristics of the tribals. The tribals acted in the past and even today they act without having any alternative ways open before them; they are outer-directed. It is doubtful whether they can show the same honesty if and when they are faced with many alternative ways to act in a certain situation. These qualities should be preserved by all means. There must be a community life on panchayat or Church level which can give structural forms to these qualities.

Ultimately the tribals have to develop an inner-directed personality. They must act on responsible personal decision. Religious and moral teaching come in here. For understandable reasons, the development programmes have left out this important area of tribal life. Here is the task of the Christian Church in tribal areas to provide the right picture of man in relation to himself, society and God.

IV. CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION

Because of the general backwardness of our people it is indicated in the Multi-purpose Tribal Block Plan that people's participation in the development programme in any significant manner cannot be depended upon. But the Christians in all areas are educated and more aware of the need for development. Thus the Churches should discover various levels at which the participation of their members is possible. Furthermore the Churches as development agencies should also think in terms of collaborating with the Government and other social welfare agencies where such collaboration is fruitful. The question of collaboration does not arise in certain hill areas in Assam as most of the members in development committees are Christians. But more Christian concern in the implementation of these programmes is necessary even in these areas. The following are a few areas where collaboration may be promoted :—

1. *Action-oriented Research*.—The Report of the Committee on Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks has indicated that the development progamme is not so successful because of the lack of scientific knowledge of tribal life and culture. The local Churches can through their pastors, teachers and hospital workers help a great deal in gathering facts which can be tabulated and interpreted by people with sociological or anthropological know-how. The Government through its various agencies can even make available the necessary funds.

2. *Schools*.—Education is a primary concern of the Community Development Plan. New schools are being opened at every possible place but the problem is in regard to teachers. The Churches have their own schools and can help to provide teachers and also share their own experience with those responsible for these new schools. Since the Church has been

able to give the written form to many tribal languages and dialects, she can help prepare literature for schools in tribal languages and dialects.

3. *Medical Assistance.*—There is a great deal of disease and suffering among our people and the Government is finding it extremely difficult to find doctors, nurses and midwives who will work in these remote areas. The Christian Medical Colleges and Nursing Schools could start special courses which will draw the attention of the medical men to the needs of our backward people. Furthermore in the local areas the Church hospitals and dispensaries can help the Government with mobile van in various ways.

4. *Social Education.*—For social education the Community Development has a separate team and the Church can help in this regard. Through song, drama, dance, flannel graph and other audio-visual aids, the importance of cleanliness, compost pits, etc., should be explained. Churches can through their schools, evangelists and such other means help in educating the local people.

Appendices

Resolutions:

1. That the reports be edited and published in the *Religion and Society* as a Study Document with the list of participants; that 12 reprints each be made available to the participants for wider distribution.

2. That two more All-India Consultations on the Church and Society in India's Tribal Communities, similar to the present one, be held in Assam and Bihar areas respectively; that the next one be held in the last week of May or the beginning of June, possibly in Assam. More individual research and study on particular topics related to tribal life which are available should provide the basis for future discussion.

Preparatory Reading

The following materials for preparatory reading were sent to the participants:—

Papers: 1. *The Changing Picture of Young Tribal Girls.* By Miss J. A. Rose, Assam.
2. *The Main Problems of Tribals in India Today—Bastar District.* By the Rev. J. C. Singh, Jagadalpur.
3. *Book Summary and Review of Nagaland.* By Verrier Elwin.
4. *Approach to the Tribal Population of India.* By P. C. Deb, Nagpur.
5. *Some Notes on Religious, Social and Cultural Change in Nagaland.*

Booklets: 7. *Not Without Witness.* By Dilbar Hans, SPCK.
8. *An Industrial Parish.* By Nirmal Minz.

9. *Ghotul School of the Mnria Gonds of Bastar.* By T. S. Wilkinson, CISRS.
10. *Community Development in a Maria Gond Village.* By T. S. Wilkinson, CISRS.

List of Participants

Co-Chairmen

1. Rt. Rev. Dilbar Hans, Bishop's Lodge, Post Box No. 1, Ranchi, Bihar.
2. Rev. B. M. Pugh, Umjayur, Mawlai, Shillong, Assam.

Other Participants

3. Rev. Benjamin Asai, Methodist Church, Jagadalpur, Dist. Bastar.
4. Mr. J. A. Augustine, Clarke Town, Nagpur, M.S.
5. Mrs. James P. Alter, Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Rajpur P.O.
6. Rev. Kijungluba Ao, Impur Christian Centre, P.O. Mokokchung, Nagaland.
7. Dr. E. C. Bhatty, Secretary, National Christian Council, Nagpur-1.
8. Mr. P. P. Bhaskey, St. John's School, Taljhari, E. Rly., Central Paraganas. Bihar.
9. Mr. P. C. Deb, P.O. Box 20, Anthropology Department, Nagpur.
10. Miss S. Das, Shanti Nivas, Jagadalpur, M.P.
11. Miss Ruth Eveland, Jidato, Pakur, Santal Paraganas, Bihar.
12. Rev. P. M. Khalkha, A/351, Sector 7, Sector 18, P.O., Rourkela 3, Dist. Sundargarh, Orissa.
13. Prof. Nirmal Minz, Babu Lane, Lutheran Church Compound, Ranchi, Bihar.
14. Miss C. Marandih, Principal, Jidato High School, Pakur, Santal Paraganas, Bihar.
15. Rev. Sunampatra Naik, Mission Compound, Ganjam Udayagiri, Ganjam District, Orissa.
16. Miss Marion Pugh, Umjayur, Mawlai, Shillong. Assam.
17. Rev. Murray Rogers, Jyoti Niketan, P.O. Kareli, Dist. Bareilly, U.P.
18. Mrs. C. M. Rogers, Jyoti-Niketan, P.O. Kareli, Dist. Bareilly, U.P.
19. Miss J. A. Rose, Superintendent, The Tribal Christian Hostels, Asapalli, Fulertal, Cachar District, Assam.
20. Mr. A. P. Salve, Advocate, Mount Road, Sadar, Nagpur, M.S.
21. Rev. J. C. B. Singh, Methodist Church, Jagadalpur, M.P.
22. Rev. R. S. Syiem, The Parsonage, Jowai, Assam.
23. Mr. L. M. Shrikant, 4/14, Asaf Ali Road, Aggarwal House, New Delhi.
24. Dr. Ram Singh, Principal, Baring Union Christian College, Batala, Punjab.

Conveners :

25. Rev. James P. Alter, Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Rajpur P.O., Dehra Dun, U.P.
26. Dr. T. S. Wilkinson, Head of the Department of Sociology, University of Nagpur, Hillside Bungalow, Kingsway, Nagpur.
27. Mr. M. M. Thomas, Panavila Junction, Thycaud, Trivandrum, Kerala.

CHANGE IN TRIBAL SOCIETY*

By P. C. Deb, *Nagpur*

Introduction

Indian civilization considered both socially and culturally represents a combination and partial integration of diverse elements.[1] The character of Indian culture may be expressed by one phrase "acceptance of unity in diversity, or harmony of contrasts."[2] According to Marriott and Cohn[3] the diversity of Indian culture can be viewed at at least four levels: All India: the sub-continent; The region: generally defined by a literary language and distinctive caste patterning; The sub-region; The local levels. Of the many diverse elements in Indian civilization, the tribal groups and their way of life constitute a distinctive feature. The tribal groups are territorially distributed all over the country and are at different stages of social and economic development. No serious thought was given to their development prior to the independence of our country. The independence has, however, completely changed the atmosphere and various provisions in the Constitution of India have paved the way for a new orientation to the approach to the tribal problems. The 'Isolation' and 'Assimilation' approaches to the tribal population advocated in the past are no longer held to be appropriate now. At present due to rapid development of communication practically no tribal society is left alone and every society goes through a natural process of growth by way of adjustment to its social, technological and physical environment, whether there is intervention or no intervention. The real problem now is not 'leaving them alone' or the imposition of alien institutions (*i.e.*, assimilation) which may rather disrupt the tribal institutions and destroy the pattern of tribal life. The real aim now "is to assist the tribals to understand the process of their own society and the process of the modern world and also to help the tribal institutions to adjust to the needs of the modern time"[4] which

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* This paper was presented at the Rajpur Dehra Dun Consultation, June 1961. Shri. P. C. Deb is at present engaged in the Survey of Tribal Languages of M.P. under the Census Organisation.

[1] B. S. Cohn and Mckim Marriott, "Networds and Centres in the integration of Indian Civilization", *Journal of Soc. Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1958, p. 1.

[2] S. K. Chatterji, "The Basic Unity underlying the Diversity of Culture", in *Interrelations of Cultures*, UNESCO, 1953, p. 182.

[3] B. S. Cohn and Mckim Marriott, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

[4] B. K. Roy Burman, "Basic Concepts of Tribal Welfare and Tribal Integration," *J. S. Res.*, Vol. III, No. 2, 1960, p. 18.

will ultimately lead to the socio-cultural integration of the tribes in the main stream of Indian society. This approach is termed "Integration", and many of the provisions in the Constitution are pointers to this approach. However, the term "integration" or "national integration" has been variously defined. According to Ruth Benedict[5] integration in a culture is brought about by its content being arranged into a permanent or semi-permanent style. M.E. Opler[6] has propounded the theory of themes to explain culture and according to him "themes are general motivations which are responsible for various sets of behaviour types in a society". L. P. Mair's[7] definition of integrated society is a "society in which established institutions and rights and obligations and values associated with them are generally accepted". This means "mutual acceptance of one another's roles and the group goals by the different parts of a whole".[8]

In India tribals have the same fundamental rights as other citizens. The policy now implemented by the Government in regard to tribals is a two-way traffic which includes respect and understanding for each other. It is also the policy now to let the tribals develop along their own genius, but for this they should be given all the facilities in the economic and other fields. When different linguistic and economic groups can co-exist in India, there is nothing wrong to allow the tribal groups to retain their own cultural elements.

Article 46 of the Constitution of India lays down that "the State shall promote with special care educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people. and, in particular, of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." In accordance with this provision many schemes have been prepared and introduced, but the latest and the most important of these, envisaging all-round development of the tribal population, is the programme jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Community Development and Co-operation, to set up 43 Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks in the most underdeveloped parts of the tribal India, during the Second Five Year Plan. The Ministry of Home Affairs in 1959 appointed a Committee to examine the work and

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[5] Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 1934, New York.

[6] Morris E. Opler, "Themes as Dynamic Forces in Culture," *Am. J. Socio.*, Vo. LI, 1945, pp. 198-206.

[7] B. K. Roy Burman, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[8] *Ibid.*,

programme of these blocks. The Report† submitted by the Committee in March 1960, is illuminating in many respects, particularly, it will be a valuable guide for the planners and administrators of the present and future development blocks.

Some Problems

Some of the socio-economic problems the Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks have to tackle are discussed below.

Land and Agriculture.—More than 80% of the tribal people depend on agriculture for their subsistence.[9] A large number of them are landless labourers. The income from the land and/or agricultural labour is far below the standard enjoyed by any other group of people. For economic development, it is therefore essential to give *top* priority to this problem. The tribal people should have sufficient land to cultivate which will give them output equal to their requirement for a better standard of living. This can be done by clearing some forests which are more in proportion to the requirement for avoiding soil erosion and destruction of forests, and by fixing land ceiling and redistributing the extra land among the landless tribals, and to those who possess land less than the standard necessary for subsistence. The aim should be that "every tribal has at least two and a half acres of wet land or 5 acres of dry land which he can cultivate".[10] Moreover, where the tribal rights on the land, they traditionally cultivate, has not yet been recognized, legislative measures should be taken to recognize such rights. Already in some of the tribal areas, this has been done.

Some of the tribals practise shifting cultivation or *jhuming*. This they do according to the ecological situation of their territory. Whereas this system of cultivation is severely criticized on the ground that it leads to soil erosion and deforestation, some suggest that this system of cultivation is not so harmful as it appears to be from the volley of criticism put forward against it. According to the latter group the harmfulness of the system can be minimized if *jhuming* is done on scientific basis. As this practice is in vogue in many tribal areas, it cannot be changed overnight or within five years. The best thing will be to evaluate the evils and advantages of the system, and on the basis of the

† The *Report of the Committee on Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks*, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, March 1960, Pp. 453, Price Rs. 7·25. The Committee consisted of Dr. Verrier Elwin (Chairman), Shri R. C. V. P. Noronha, I.C.S., Shri R. C. Bahl, I.C.S., Shri N. M. Wadia, M.P., and Shri M. C. Nanavatty, with Shri O. K. Moorthy as Secretary.

[9] *Report*, p. 44.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

findings, measures have to be taken ultimately to eradicate the system but during the transition period to minimise its soil erosion effect.

Communication.—Except NEFA and Nagaland (where air strips and air dropping facilities are available) roads are the only means of communication at present in the tribal areas for marketing, for personal travel, and for exchange of ideas. Success of the development projects, to a large extent, depends on the improvement of the system of communication in the tribal hill areas. It is therefore necessary that all the tribal areas should be connected by road, rail or other systems. But the progress so far has not been encouraging as has been pointed out by the Elwin Committee: "after three years... there are Blocks ... where poor communications are still a major impediment to progress".

Health and Medicine.—The medical facilities available in the tribal areas are much too inadequate as in other rural areas of the country. Except in a few advanced tribal areas the meagre medical facilities available are also not properly utilized, due to various superstitious beliefs. The magical belief for curing a disease and use of herbs are still prevalent, and the Elwin Committee[11] has pointed out that "one of the great difficulties about spreading the use of modern medicine in the tribal areas is the existence of the local priests and medicine men in whom not only the tribal people but a large number of Indian peasantry retain considerable faith". Modern medical facilities should be available to the tribal people and they should be convinced of the beneficial aspects of this system in comparison to their traditional system. For this and for good hygienic practices, propaganda in the tribal areas should be intensified.

Education.—For the integration of the tribal groups into the national society, spread of education is very important. It is only through a proper type of education that the tribal people can understand and accept the benefits of modern technology and social welfare programmes. The problem here is however not very different from that in other rural areas of India. As pointed out by Elwin Committee[12] education in tribal areas presents two distinct problems. The first is to provide a type of education which will produce young men and women who will remain in their own districts as leaders of their people and provide administrators, doctors, engineers, agriculturists, teachers and others who will be able to take the place of the outsiders who at present work in the tribal areas and who often find living there difficult and frustrating. The second problem is to provide a type of education for the mass of the people who will be likely for many years to come, to continue to

[11] *Report*, p. 81.
[12] *Ibid.*, 85.

live by agriculture in the hills and forests and for whom a very simple and practical type of teaching is required.

However, "schools at the lower primary stage in the hills are seldom adapted to the rural scene."[13] There is a very strong demand for education wherever missionary influence has penetrated and it is here that the majority of the private schools are started.[14] The demand in other areas is also there but it varies according to the adjustments made by outside teachers in the area concerned. It should be the endeavour on the part of planners as also of the teachers not to overdo anything because of their background outside the tribal areas. The emphasis here should be not only on the syllabus but how best the minds of the children can be adapted to the new form of school now introduced in their areas. These schools can also adopt certain of the elements of the traditional educational institutions of the tibals. In those tribal areas where well-organized dormitory system is prevalent, the aim should be to co-ordinate the activities of such institution with the modern school instead of a competition between the two. In the syllabus, there should not be anything which may hurt the feelings of the tribals or critical of tribal life and culture. Tribal dialects should also be encouraged and books should be published in such dialects. It is observed that where the Christian missionaries have penetrated, they have given encouragement to the tribal dialect and have introduced Roman script. This has been an encouraging feature. Emphasis should also be given to basic education or training in various arts and crafts.

In a few tribal areas, Ashram Schools have been introduced. It is a residential type of school where children reside and learn. The programme of education includes both general and basic education.

To conclude, the aim of tribal education should be that the tribal people fully utilize the educational resources of their environment which will give them opportunity for a well balanced body and mind.

Conclusion.—Integration of the tribals into the larger society of India is considered by the Government to be the best way of bringing the tribal people to the same level of development as the rest of the population are. Constitutional provisions are also constantly reminding the authorities to take special care to bring the backward people to the stage the other advanced people have arrived in economic and social life.

Various private and government agencies are working for the good of the tribal people. But the latest scheme of the Government of India

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[13] *Report*, 86.

[14] *Ibid.*, 87.

to set up 43 multi-purpose tribal blocks in the most backward tribal areas is likely to bring far-reaching results in the rapid development of these communities. The scheme includes provision for social and economic development. Although the Elwin Committee has pointed out some drawbacks in the operation of the scheme, it is expected that during the Third-Five Year Plan and later, when trained personnel will be available in large numbers, the scheme will make good progress.

The success of the scheme, however, depends more on the psychological response of the tribal people than on the amount of money spent by the Government.

NOTES ON BOOKS

A Philosophy for NEFA. By Verrier Elwin. (Published by Sachin Roy on behalf of N.E.F. Agency, Shillong), 1959. Pp. 295. Price Rs. 5.

In this second edition, published two years after the original one, we are introduced to the "Philosophy" through a chapter on the history of the people of the Hill Districts and the general administrative set-up.

It is in the second chapter that the author lays bare the crux of the problem—that of adopting a comprehensive policy for tribal development. Tracing the growth of expert and inexpert opinions on tribal affairs, the author quotes from poets, novelists, philosophers and anthropologists, leading us to the culminating point of such opinion, *viz.*, the acceptance of the mean between Isolation and Assimilation. With the objectivity of the true scientists, he retraces his steps from the extreme position that he had earlier taken and even gives a detailed criticism of the policy of Isolation which he had once advocated. Explaining thereafter the dangers of Assimilation, the author seeks to strike a synthesis between the two approaches. Prescribing a "go-slow" policy, he says ".... if we allow a breathing space in which to adjust themselves to the new world; if we do not overwhelm them with too many officials; if we aim at fundamentals and eliminate everything that is not vitally necessary.... there is a chance we may succeed". We would preserve all the best that is in the tribal culture, their moral virtues, their self-reliance, their courage, their artistic gifts and give to them the technical know-how, the comradeship and the wider world-view. Although this is an excellent, almost a romantic, policy on paper, it is beset with many pitfalls, not the least among them being the lack of trained personnel, with that inner desire to take up the challenge of development work amongst these people with earnestness, devotion and understanding.

The subsequent pages are devoted to particular areas of work such as those related to land and forest, social and religious customs and practices and the problems arising out of them. The chapter on dress contains interesting and informative sections on the economy of dress and the relation of dress to health. While dealing with psychological aims of N.E.F.A., significant points are made on (1) recognition of personality, *i.e.*, the tribal folk are not specimens but just plain human beings in all fundamental ways, (2) Tribal Councils and Tribal Law and (3) The inferiority complex.

Informative and authoritative as this book is, the author still leaves to the imagination and understanding of the reader one very significant point, namely, that of preserving tribal culture while bringing in changes in their economy. The main shafts of the scheme are aimed at economic development while retaining other aspects of their culture. Without entering into theoretical controversies of the movement of social

change, one can still fairly doubt the practical working of such a scheme. History is replete with examples and even today in our own country we are everyday witnessing a gradual drift away from our older ways with the changes that are being introduced in our economy; whether such changes are for better or worse is a moot point, but the fact of change in the general way of life of any people, once changes are wrought in any one aspect, still remains.

However, this is a comprehensive treatise—the fruit of Dr. Elwin's wide and intimate knowledge of tribal life in India—and although the title is suggestive of a work specifically on the Hill Districts, the many suggestions contained therein may profitably be applied elsewhere in the country.

The Department of Sociology,
Hislop College.

K. K. VAIDYA.

Truth Shall Prevail सत्यमेव जयते (Reply to Niyogi Committee. By A. Soares and seven other Roman Catholics of India and published by A. Soares on behalf of the Catholic Association of Bombay, 5, Convent Street, Bombay 1. Pp. 276 and Price Rs. 2·50.

The sub-title of this book which was first published in 1957 sufficiently indicates its immediate purpose. In giving a reply to the Niyogi Committee the authors have done a great deal of research in presenting coherently the development work that has been undertaken by the Indian Church, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, among the tribals of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

The Niyogi Committee came into existence as a result of the Madhya Pradesh Government Resolution of April 14, 1954. The crux of the Resolution was that "representations have been made to Government from time to time that Christian missionaries, either forcibly or through fraud and temptations of monetary and other gain, convert illiterate aboriginals and other backward people, thereby offending the feelings of non-Christians···" As such the inquiry conducted by the Niyogi Committee was chiefly confined to the tribal regions of the former State of M.P. In this book the authors have not only refuted systematically the many charges levelled against the missionaries and the Church but have pointed out, through "objective truth", the grave error in the very method of investigation. Many of the Christian people are familiar with the Report but "The Background of the Niyogi Report" as given here is very revealing and helps to see the Committee's evaluation of Christian work in its proper perspective. Furthermore, the extract from the judgement given by Chief Justice M. Hidayatulla of the Nagpur High Court on the questionnaire of the Committee sufficiently indicates the presence of bias both in the collection and interpretation of facts. In the last chapter the gulf between Hindu and tribal religions has been pointed out thus refuting the theory that the transition from tribalism to Hinduism is smooth and easy.

The Niyogi Committee Report was shelved but efforts are still being made to revive the accusations of forcible conversion (*vide* Lok Sabha discussions of September 4, 1961, on forcible conversions.) This book provides the factual basis that will help us to face this challenge and also draws our attention to the possibilities and problems of the Indian Church in the rapidly changing tribal regions. It also cautions us against the dangers of biased studies. Finally, it points to the urgent need for a re-examination of our approach to the tribal people in the light of the social, political, economic and religious changes of today and with reference to the Government's plans and projects. The book will undoubtedly be of great help to Christian leaders in tribal regions.

T. S. WILKINSON.

Not Without Witness. By Dilbar Hans. S.P.C.K. in India (P.O. Box 501, P.T., Madras–3). Pp. 62. Price Rs. 1·50.

The Industrial Parish. By Nirmal Minz, Student Research Monograph, September 1960. (Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur).

Ghotul: School of the Muria Gonds of Bastar. Case Study of a Village Ghotul. By T. S. Wilkinson. (Social Research Series: C.I.S.R.S.), Pp. 44, 1961.

Community Development in a Muria Gond Village of Bastar. Case Study of a Multi-purpose Tribal Block. By T. S. Wilkinson. (Social Research Series: C.I.S.R.S., Pp. 23, 1961.

The authors of these studies were leaders of the Rajpur Consultation on *A Christian Approach to Tribal Communities Today* and the booklets were sent to all participants for their preparatory reading.

The Mundas are a tribal people of the Chotanagpur area. *Not Without Witness* "discusses certain of their beliefs, enshrined in age-old legends and describes some of their customs (marriage, festivals, singing and dancing)" and points out that God has not left the religion and culture of the Mundas without a witness to Himself. A Munda himself, Dilbar Hans (now a Bishop of the Church of India) wrote this while in the Theological College. "It is", in his own words, "an attempt to shift what seems to be a heap of useless ashes in search of that divine spark, which God has kindled in all His children and which, however, near to extinction, will surely burn up and shine forth when fanned by the breath of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ." It asks "what help the evangelist can find in the customs of the Mundas". The conclusion is best summed up in the sub-title of the book: A Preparation for the Gospel in the Beliefs and Customs of the Munda People.

The Industrial Parish is a case study of detribalisation of a tribal group in an industrial setting. Its purpose is to see how, why and to what extent Kol tribal culture changes due to the industrial impact. Mr. Minz, the author of the monograph, himself a member of the Oraon

tribe is now on the staff of the Lutherean Theological Seminary, Ranchi. This adds to the significance of the study.

The *case studies* of a *Ghotul* which is the traditional means of tribal education of Muria Gonds, and of a tribal *Community Development Block* are by a trained sociologist, Dr. T. S. Wilkinson who is the head of the Department of Sociology of Hislop College and the University of Nagpur. The studies make clear why it is essential to make use of some of the important traditional social institutions of tribal people, if development projects are to take root among them. For instance on education, the author says: "Instead of compelling the Ghotul members to come to the school, the school should go to the Ghotul and educate them through the educational framework so dear to these young people. This will require a complete reorganisation of the school system in these areas and not just a few additions in the curriculum." Further the problem of proper personnel is considered the most crucial in development. "It is not only sufficient that these Block workers have the skill and scientific know-how, but they should also be dedicated persons who are motivated by a keen sense of mission". In order to procure such people it is important to give attention to their basic "requirements" which can enable them to bring their family with them to the tribal area, and also to their proper orientation in tribal culture. "It is impossible for any person to become interested in the life of the tribal people if their behaviour remains unintelligible to him, or due to his exaggerated ethnocentrism he is unwilling to recognise the values that are to be found in the most diverse ways of life."

M. M. THOMAS.

673–61. Printed at The Bangalore Press, Bangalore City,
by T. K. Balakrishnan, Superintendent.